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# CONTENTS

FEBRUARY 2016

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# 34

## 4X4 OF THE YEAR

High noon in the High Country for 2015's best four-wheel drives.



## 26

First Drive:  
Mitsubishi Pajero  
Sport.

## 72

Custom 4x4:  
79 Series Land  
Cruiser.







**4X4**  
AUSTRALIA  
**NOW ON  
TABLET**  
via 4X4 Australia app



**PAGE  
144**

The lowdown on the  
latest gear

**82**

Explore: Mazda  
BT-50 takes on  
outback SA.

## 4CAST

- 10** 4WORD
- 12** LATEST NEWS FROM THE 4X4 WORLD
- 16** TRAVEL BULLETIN

## 4X4 DRIVEN

- 26** FIRST DRIVE: PAJERO SPORT
- 30** FIRST DRIVE: NAVARA WORKHORSE RANGE
- 34** 4X4OTY: 2015'S BEST 4X4S
- 72** CUSTOM 4X4: STRETCHED 79 LAND CRUISER
- 104** CUSTOM 4X4: SNAKE PATROLS
- 126** FIRST DRIVE: UNIMOG U430; 6X6 ZETROS
- 132** HISTORY: TALBOT SOUTH-NORTH CROSSING
- 162** 4X4 SHED: MAZDA BT-50
- 164** 4X4 SHED: TOYOTA TROOP CARRIER

## 4X4 EXPLORE

- 82** OUTBACK SA
- 94** EAST SIMPSON, NT/QLD
- 116** MURRAY SUNSET NP, VIC

## 4X4 GEAR

- 144** NEW STUFF
- 150** 4X4 RECOVERY TECHNIQUES, PART TWO
- 154** TESTED: NARVA EXTREME HID
- 156** TESTED: PELICAN LIGHTS
- 158** TESTED: OLD-SCHOOL VISOR
- 160** TESTED: POWER MONKEY

## 4X4 OPINION

- 20** DIRTY WORK JOHN ROTH
- 22** TECH TORQUE FRASER STRONACH
- 166** FOOTLOOSE RON MOON
- 168** BULLDUST DEAN MELLOR
- 170** TIGHTLINES STEVE STARLING
- 172** CAMP COOKING VIV MOON

## THE SCORE

- 174** ALL THE STATS, FIGURES AND  
PRICES OF EVERY 4X4 YOU CAN BUY

Privacy notice on page 178



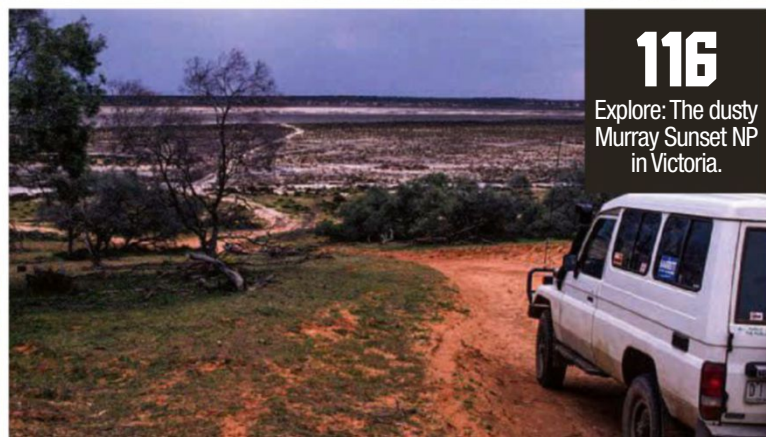
**94**

Explore: Tackling  
Jol's Track in the  
East Simpson.



**104**

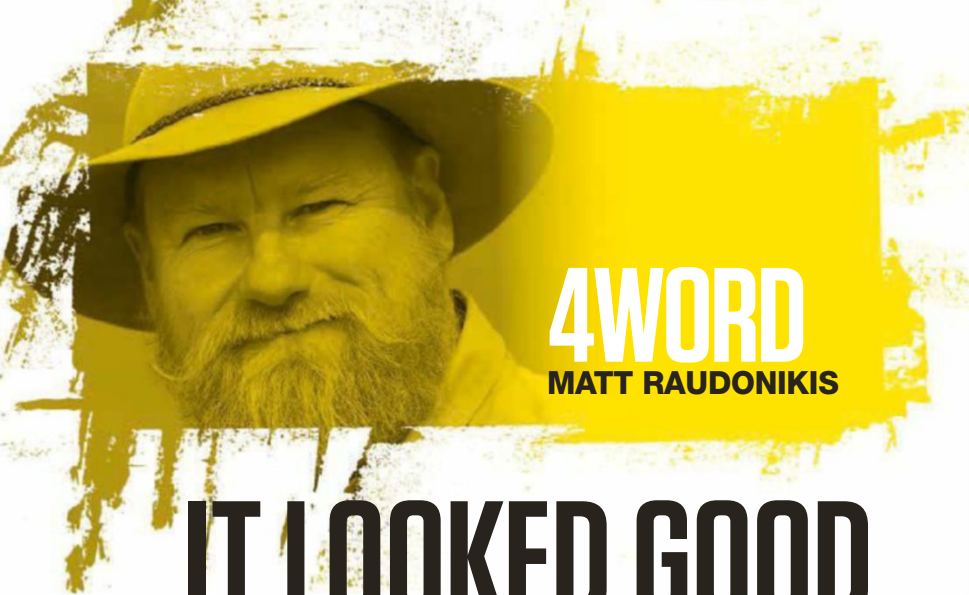
Custom 4x4:  
Nissan Snake  
Patrols.



**116**

Explore: The dusty  
Murray Sunset NP  
in Victoria.





## 4WORD MATT RAUDONIKIS

# IT LOOKED GOOD ON THE NAPKIN

**O**NE of the great things about 4X4OTY testing is being able to spend so much time in the year's best new four-wheel drives. It allows us to find the good and bad points of the cars, as well as any niggles that might drive you nuts if you owned one of them. But it also leaves me wondering if the boffins that design the cars and their components actually test them in the field to see if they perform as intended.

For instance, which gurus decided it was a good idea to put chrome and silver around the vents at the ends of vehicles' dash panels? When you look to the external rear view mirrors, all you get is a reflection in the glass of those damn vents. I remember years ago criticising an early Mercedes-Benz M-Class for this and now it seems other manufacturers have followed Benz's lead.

How about the genius at Toyota who did away with the knob that controls stereo volume? In the Hilux and Fortuner there is now a touchscreen with up-and-down buttons on silly-looking, tablet-style stereo units. I wonder if anyone at Toyota has ever tried to operate those touchscreen buttons while driving over a bumpy track, which should be

the terrain of choice for such 4x4 vehicles.

The dash on the PXII Ford Ranger and new Everest is a big improvement on that in the original Ranger, but has anyone at Ford tried to use the HVAC controls? There are a million tiny buttons stowed so low on the centre stack that they are in the dark and out of sight, making simple temperature control adjustments on the run a hazardous task. At least the Mazda BT-50 has nice, big dials for individual temperature controls.

The dial for the Multi-Terrain System in the Everest is stupid as well. The dial has four selections on it but, rather than having a corresponding number of positions on the switch so you can blindly operate it, it spins indefinitely, so you have to look at the dash or the dial to know what mode is selected.

We're sure the engineers and designers of these great cars are clever, talented and passionate people, but sometimes I really do wonder if they use these products in the field they are made for.



*Matt*



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www.melbourne4x4.com.au



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## CHECK OUT OUR WEBSITE

WE might like old 4x4 trucks here at 4X4 Australia, but we're no strangers to new technologies, and we like to think we're pretty good at keeping up with the times. 4WDs are constantly keeping us on our toes, after all.

To keep up with all the latest 4x4 info, head to [www.4x4australia.com.au](http://www.4x4australia.com.au)

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# 4CAST

NEWS AND VIEWS



Nakajima-san with his baby: the eighth-gen Toyota Hilux.

## 70 SERIES NOT GOING ANYWHERE

RUMOURS OF THE DEMISE OF TOYOTA'S 70 SERIES ARE EXAGGERATED.

and Rover's iconic Defender and Nissan's Y61 Patrol may be going the way of the dinosaur, but that won't be the case with Toyota's 70 Series, one of the few other remaining 4x4s with live axles front and rear.

That's the word from Hiroki Nakajima, the deputy chief officer of Toyota's product planning group and one of the company's managing officers.

If that name sounds familiar it's because Nakajima-san was the chief engineer responsible for the all-new eighth-generation Hilux that was released in late 2015.

Nakajima-san admits that in a world where safety and emissions regulations are closing in on vehicles like the 70 Series, keeping this tough, old-school 4x4 in production does have its problems.

To this end, he sees a two-

pronged approach for the 70 and any possible placement. The 70 as we know it now will most likely be relegated to developing countries where government-mandated safety and emissions regulations aren't as strict, while a new or significantly revised model will be developed for countries like Australia, where government bureaucracy wields a bigger stick.


There has already been a split along these lines, given the current 4.5-litre V8 turbo-diesel introduced in 2007 was initially only sold in Australia and was designed to meet Euro 4 emissions, while other countries retained the older six-cylinder diesel and petrol engines, a situation that still exists today.

As for a new 70, or a 70 replacement, for Australia and other more regulated

markets, Nakajima-san says, "anything is on the table". More specifically he hinted that the twin-turbo V8 diesel currently in the 200 Series could be a possibility, given the current single-turbo engine has limitations due to the problems of the exhaust and inlet plumbing that are inherent with a 90-degree V8 engine fed by a single turbo. He also hinted that the highway gearing with the current five-speed manual isn't ideal and will need to be addressed with a new manual gearbox and possibly an optional automatic gearbox.

Nakajima-san also confirmed that Toyota is also working on diesel-electric hybrid powertrains, but not necessarily for any future 70 Series-style vehicle. Toyota, a world leader in the development of petrol-electric

hybrids, has previously dismissed diesel-electric hybrids on the grounds that diesel soot and NOx emissions are at odds with the 'green' image that has always been a central theme of hybrid technology. Diesels, due to their high compression ratios, also have greater pumping losses than petrol engines, which reduce the energy recovery on engine over-run, upon which hybrids rely.

However, recent diesel engine developments, as evident in the Toyota's new 2.8-litre diesel, have seen a move to significantly lower compression ratios that reduce not only pumping losses but also the NOx output. 

**NO TO NOx**

To keep the iconic 70 Series in Australia, a stricter emissions regime will need to be implemented.





## TOUGH COMPETITION

Ford has examples of the Tacoma cutting laps at You Yangs as it develops the Ford Ranger for the US market.



# NEW FORDS ARE TAKING SHAPE IN AUSTRALIA

NEXT-GEN FORD RANGER AND EVEREST FOR  
THE U.S. COULD BE DEVELOPED IN AUSTRALIA.

**F**ord Australia has begun development of the next generation Ranger and Everest at its You Yangs proving ground, which in 2015 celebrated its 50th anniversary. The top-secret facility south-west of Melbourne is already being used to evaluate key rivals to the Ranger in the US market, including the Toyota Tacoma (based on the Prado's chassis) and Chevrolet Colorado (an Americanised version of the Holden Colorado) alongside the new Ranger PXII.

The revelation adds fuel to the fire that the Ranger will be sold in America – the world's biggest ute market – where large pick-ups including the Ford F-Series, Chevrolet Silverado and Ram

have dominated the market for decades.

While Ford is yet to confirm the next-generation Ranger for America, US publications have reported union negotiations have begun regarding production of the Ranger in Detroit as early as 2018, suggesting the model life of the current model may run to only seven years. The current Ranger went on sale in 2011 – well shy of the 10-year-plus lifespan that utes typically have in Australia.

In 2014 Chevrolet introduced the Colorado to the US, where it shades sales of its larger Silverado sibling, but it is still an important volume vehicle and one that executives believe could grow in popularity, given the trend

towards downsizing and the focus on fuel efficiency.

The current T6 Ranger and its SUV sibling, the Everest, were designed and engineered by Ford in Australia in collaboration with other Ford entities around the world.

**4X4 Australia** has been told the Australian engineering team is highly regarded, following the success of the current Ranger – it's sold in more than 180 countries and makes up almost half of Ford Australia's sales – and has been trusted with the development of the crucial new global model.

A Ford Australia spokesman declined to comment on the next-generation Ranger and what role local engineers are

playing in its development.

When the Ranger does go to America, it's likely to pick up a petrol engine option, something it currently doesn't have. While Americans buy diesels in commercial vehicles such as utes/pick-ups, they also demand petrol alternatives; given toughening emissions standards, that demand for petrol propulsion is unlikely to waiver.

Australia is fast becoming a development hotbed for ute engineering; Toyota engineers used Australia for the bulk of the development work on the just-released Hilux, while Holden and Mitsubishi have also used punishing Australian roads to test their respective Colorado and Triton utes. **4X4**





# Lucky seven for Pajero?

**THE PAJERO SPORT IS ONLY AVAILABLE WITH FIVE SEATS IN OZ, BUT THAT COULD SOON CHANGE.**

**M**any pundits were surprised to find that Mitsubishi's new Pajero Sport will only be available as a five-seat wagon. It was especially surprising because the Thai-built Pajero Sport is available with seven seats in markets outside of Australia.

The reason Australia misses out on the third row appears to be that the Pajero, as it stands, doesn't include airbag protection for third-row passengers. This would have a negative effect on the vehicle's ability to score a maximum five-star ANCAP safety rating, which the car currently has here.

The five-seat Pajero Sport has seven SRS airbags, including dual front SRS airbags, side and curtain SRS airbags, and a driver's knee SRS airbag – but there's nothing for anyone in the back.

Mitsubishi Motors Australia (MMA) is believed to be looking at a means to fit the third row of seats to local models while retaining its five-star safety rating. This will mean adding side curtain airbags to the rear of the vehicle.

If you've scratched the Pajero Sport off your wish list due to its number of pews, then don't give up on it just yet.

MMA is expected to make an announcement soon. 🚗



# 2,000,000TH DEFENDER ATTRACTS BIG BUCKS

**THE 2,000,000TH LAND ROVER DEFENDER HAS SOLD FOR A RECORD PRICE AT A CHARITY AUCTION IN LONDON.**

**T**he 2,000,000th Land Rover Defender to be built has sold in London for what is thought to be a record amount for any version of the iconic model: £400,000.

The one-of-a-kind Defender was sold at a prestigious charity auction at Bonhams, with all proceeds to be donated to Land Rover's humanitarian and conservation partners.

This is thought to be the most valuable production Land Rover ever sold at auction, and it was bought by a lucky bidder from Qatar in the Middle East.

The vehicle was built in

May 2015 by an all-star cast of brand ambassadors and people from Land Rover's history, including Bear Grylls, Virginia McKenna OBE, and Stephen and Nick Wilks, sons of the founders of Land Rover.

The proceeds from the sale will be donated to the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, which will use the donation to help communities in south-east Nepal to improve management of natural disasters; and the Born Free Foundation, which plans to use the funds to support the 'Project Lion Rover' wildlife

conservation initiative in Meru National Park, Kenya.

The project provides critical equipment to help protect lions and other wildlife and establishes education and community involvement to tackle issues such as snaring and poaching.

Production of the Defender is expected to end in January 2016, with the last model also expected to attract plenty of interest.

An all-new replacement is tipped to be launched in 2017, but it will be a far cry from the Landie that has stood the test of time for more than 60 years. 🚗



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# TRAVEL BULLETIN

RON AND VIV MOON'S LATEST NEWS AND INFO  
FROM AUSTRALIA'S TREKS AND TRACKS.

## CAMPING ON KALAMURINA (SA)

Campers are welcome to stay at the Kalamurina – a property of the Australian Wildlife Conservancy group (see: [www.australianwildlife.org](http://www.australianwildlife.org)) – between April 1 and August 30 each year. Access is via a station track just north of Mungerannie on the Birdsville Track. Camping is in designated sites on the eastern side of the property. Bookings are essential and should be made at least two days in advance (the gate is locked). No campfires. **Phone Tess or Mark on (08) 8675 8310. Some restrictions apply. To camp it costs \$25 per vehicle.**

## PERMIT SYSTEM FOR NINE MILE BEACH (NSW)

A permit system has been introduced to control four-wheel drive vehicles on Nine Mile Beach from Redhead to Belmont, south of Newcastle.

The system, which will also cover Belmont Wetlands State Park, will cost \$33 per week, \$44 per month or \$88 for a year. No motorbikes, quad bikes or unregistered vehicles will be permitted.

Vehicles will be required to stick to designated beach-

access routes, speed limits will be enforced and people's behaviour will be monitored. A ranger is to be appointed.

Permits are initially available from the Redhead service station and Belmont North bait and tackle shop, but other outlets should soon be available.

## NATIONAL PARK PASSES ONLINE (TAS)

Visitors and Tasmanians are now able to purchase their national park passes online, anytime. People intending to visit will be able to use their mobile devices while travelling around the state, or use their computer or mobile device before they holiday, to purchase a parks pass. **For more information: [www.parks.tas.gov.au](http://www.parks.tas.gov.au)**

## ROSE ISLE STATION (NSW)

'Rose Isle' is a sheep and cattle grazing property situated 70km down from Bourke on the Louth-Bourke road. It offers beautiful river views, peaceful camp sites, shearers' quarters accommodation, fishing, camping, hiking, or just a spot to relax.

Garry and Samantha Mooring have lived at Rose Isle

with their family for the past 30 years and they can cater for overnight visitors, with dinner and breakfast, and will also prepare homemade packs for your day trips. **For more info phone: (02) 6874 7371, or find them on Facebook.**

## PART CLOSURE OF COORONG (SA)

Because of on-going dredging operations at the mouth of the Murray River, part of the Coorong National Park will be closed until further notice.

The closure applies to the whole of the Younghusband Peninsula west of a line transecting the park north to south at Barkers Knoll (co-ordinate 138.898474° E, 35.559926° S) to and including its tip at the mouth of the Murray River.

Also, all areas within a 5m radius of a perimeter formed by buoy lines and/or markers surrounding any dredging plant or equipment are closed to the public.

## FABULOUS STADDIE CAMPING (QLD)

Straddie Camping offers easy-access island camping on the idyllic North Stradbroke Island,

which is within easy driving distance of Brisbane and the Gold Coast.

Popular with four-wheel drivers, surfers and fishermen, the island also offers scuba diving, swimming, kayaking, sand boarding and bush walking, and is renowned for dolphins, turtles, manta-rays, kangaroos and koalas, as well as superb views of the annual humpback whale migration.

**For more information: [www.straddiecamping.com.au](http://www.straddiecamping.com.au)**

## BREATHTAKING SKYWALKS FOR KALBARRI (WA)

Not everyone will be happy with these developments in the Kalbarri National Park, but the WA government recently announced an tourism precinct in the park.

This includes two 100-metre-high skywalks at the Inyaka Wookai Watju site (West Loop), the sealing of the Loop/Z-Bend Road and redevelopment of the Z-Bend and Meanarra Hill tourist sites.

The skywalks will project 20m and 12m beyond the gorge rim, more than 100m above the Murchison River. **For more information go to: [www.parks.dpaw.wa.gov.au](http://www.parks.dpaw.wa.gov.au)**

Coorong National Park.





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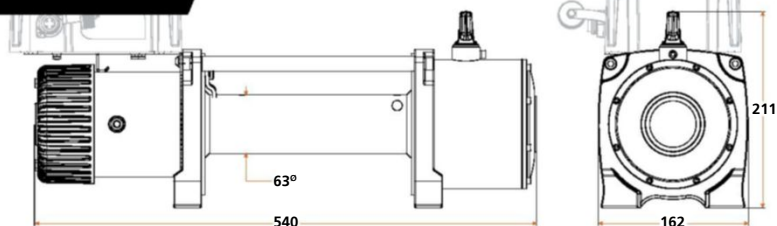
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2000	910	11.0	3.4	150
4000	1810	8.8	2.7	205
6000	2720	7.5	2.3	235
8000	3630	6.0	1.8	252
9500	4310	5.6	1.7	300

### TORQ 12,000LB SYNTHETIC

Gear Ratio		294:1		
Gear Train		3-Stage Planetary		
Performance of 1st layer				
Line Pull		Line Speed 12V		Motor Current 12V
lbs	kgs	fpm	mpm	amp
0	0	16.4	5.0	85
4000	1810	8.8	2.7	160
6000	2720	7.5	2.3	191
8000	3630	6.7	2.0	235
10000	4540	5.6	1.7	270
12000	5440	4.9	1.5	300

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A black and white portrait of John Rooth, an older man with a full, grey beard and mustache, looking directly at the camera with a slight smile. He is wearing a dark jacket.

# DIRTY WORK

JOHN ROTH

**SOME OF THE BEST EXPERIENCES ARE OFTEN THE MOST DANGEROUS. ROTHY RECOUNTS A FEW TIMES HE BATTLED WITH MOTHER NATURE.**

**T**here are certain situations that forge friendships more than everyday life ever can. With a season of *LowRange* now finished, I guess it's time to reflect on some of those situations – especially because I'm down here at the Mudflats Hotel all on my own...

During the last year or so, the *LowRange* team travelled all over the country, making the DVDs you've been getting with the recent editions of *4X4 Australia*. Off-roading has been a way of life for me for many years, and it never ceases to be about the most fun you can have without blowing a thong – with a few serious moments thrown in, too.

One of these more serious moments was experienced on a trip last year when we spent a night in gale force winds, tucked in to the ferns behind the cliffs north of Shelburne Bay. We had set up in relative calm, with few hints of the sleepless night to come. But before midnight, the winds picked up and ripped through awnings, blowing rain straight through zips.

I woke up wet in a tangle of awning, thankful for the Leatherman tool I always tuck under the pillow. I usually have it in case Kenno zip-ties my zippers closed, but this time I needed it to get out of a mess of fabric. The poles had twisted

like pretzels and one was belting around, waiting to take out any Rooth silly enough not to grab it from behind.

After I tucked away what was left of the awning, my swag stayed tight, and dry inside, though there might have been a puddle of rain under it!

In the morning, I could see our camera team – Melanie and Gav – coping with a roof topper that was whipping up and down. Kenno's hard-floor camper was facing away from the wind and was somewhat protected, because it had a load on his roof rack, but he still had to 'shorten canvas' to stop the poles bending more than they had already.

**Roaring on Development Road up the Cape is harsh on vehicles, but it's not as tough as it used to be.**

1. The price Glen pays for carrying so much comfort on the back of the 79 is that the rear axle hugs the ground, launching the front skywards whenever there's a decent dip in the track.

2. At the end of the good days, we get to finish before the sun sets and enjoy a cook up.

3. All dressed up in his crocodile suit, Glen had a big surprise for Kenno, who had been quietly wading in the pools.

4. Kent and I take time out for one of Glen's specially brewed 'uber coffees', using Milo's tailgate to shelter from the wind and rain.





1 2  
3 4



Yet, a couple of days later we were trolling around in the sunlit pools at Indian Head, laughing like nongs. We'd beaten old Mother Nature again, albeit with some awning casualties.

A month or so later, we nearly lost three vehicles on a wild beach in the Gulf after forging a track through country that had never been driven before. The tide, after not shifting for more than 24 hours, decided to rip in at about a metre an hour. The beach turned to puddled mud and we fought like demons to get our trucks to

higher ground – especially the heavy and almost-new 79.

What was the result? As usual, hardship meant an even closer bond and some harder partying the next time we got to safety. This is, after all, what adventuring is all about. You expect some hardship on an adventure and, as long as you survive, it's the stuff that makes the trip memorable. I feel sorry for folks who never take risks – they miss out not only on the more remote parts of our brilliant country, but also on the stuff of life itself. **44**

Towing the camper put Kenno behind the game when we were crossing some salt flats in the middle of a stinking-hot Gulf day.







# TECH TORQUE

FRASER STRONACH

**IF YOU THINK SELF-DRIVING CARS WILL BE COMMONPLACE IN A FEW YEARS, YOU NEED TO THINK AGAIN.**

**B**ack in the mid-1980s, so-called 'flying cars' were being talked up as the way of the future. They were going to make roads obsolete and traffic jams a thing of the past. 30 years later we are still waiting for them to take off.

Now driverless, or 'autonomous', cars are making all the headlines and, if you believe the hype, are about to become commonplace on our roads. A recently released research paper by commercial UK 'think tank' *Juniper Research* predicts autonomous cars will be widely adopted by consumers in five years, and in ten years there will be 20 million self-driving cars on the world's roads.

I guess there's nothing like positive thinking, but it seems this is very much a pipe dream. Lots of things will stand in the way of the adoption of autonomous cars. Some of these are obvious:

- For people who don't wish to drive, there are alternative forms of transport including taxis, buses, trams and trains. Perhaps more significant will be the rise of ride-sharing, phone-app-driven services like Uber, as they provide an easy and convenient way to get about without having to drive yourself or even own a car.

- Autonomous cars won't be cheap. They will need a whole raft of high-end technology such as radar, cameras and proximity sensors, not to mention sophisticated control software as well as robotics to control the steering, brakes and throttle.

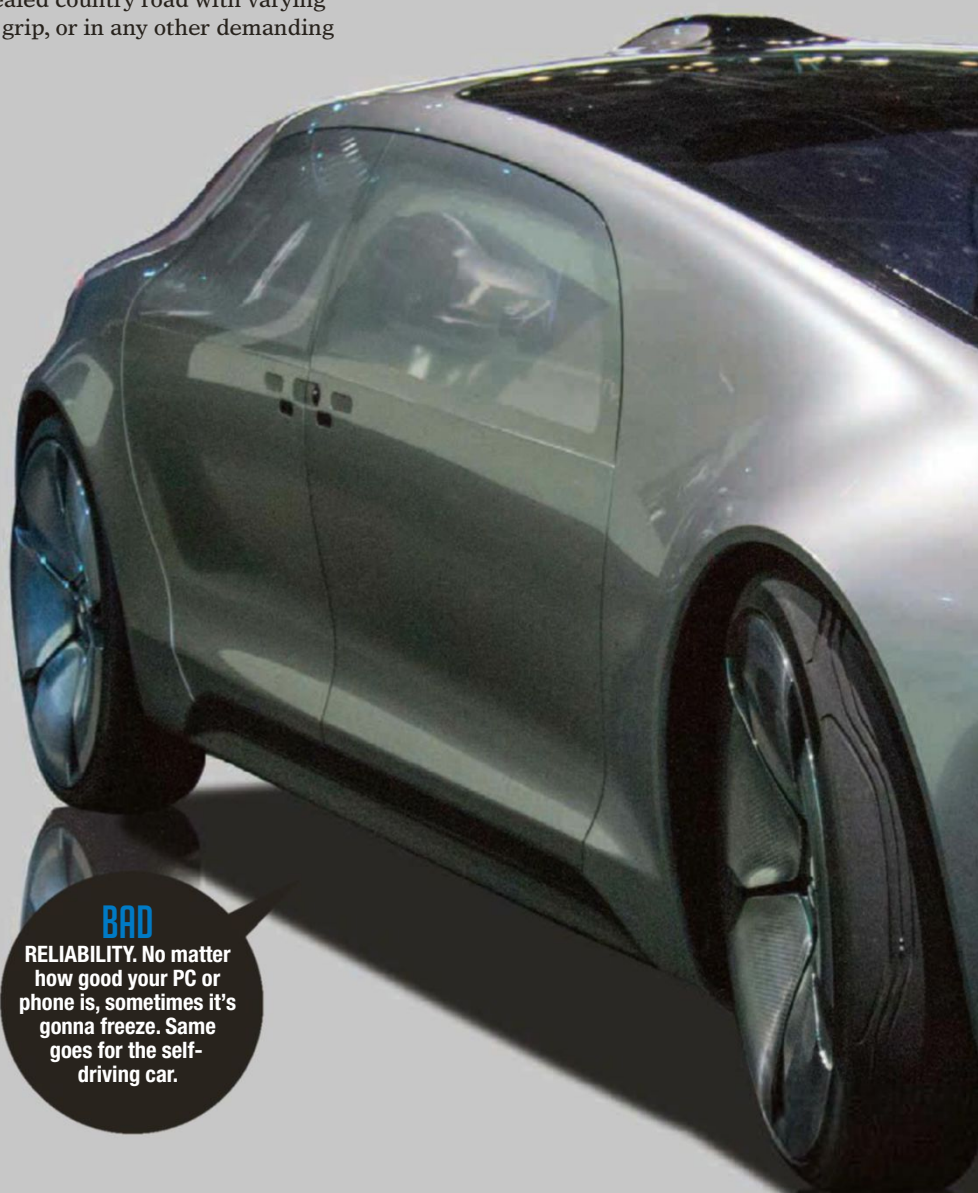
- Conventional vehicles come in myriad types such as sports cars, hatchbacks, sedans, wagons, people movers, vans, utes and four-wheel drives. There is no way that autonomous cars will be offered in such a wide range. They will probably be restricted to small, city runabouts that will potentially satisfy just one segment of the new-car market. That alone will limit their market penetration, at least in the short and middle term.

- Autonomous cars will present a difficult challenge for lawmakers and vehicle insurers. Who is to blame if an

autonomous car runs over a pedestrian? Will it fall back on the carmaker, the car owner or the software developer? If an autonomous car is faced with the dilemma of hitting a pedestrian or veering off to the side and into another car, what decision will it make and who is to blame if it makes the 'wrong' decision?

- Driving a car in heavy traffic on a multi-lane expressway, or in wet or slippery conditions, or down a winding and unsealed country road with varying levels of grip, or in any other demanding

driving environment requires a driver to make complex and rapid decisions based on experience. This will be difficult to replicate in the central control unit, or 'brain', of an autonomous car. Even something as simple as a plastic bag blowing in front of a car, which a human driver will quickly perceive as a non-threat, may trigger hard braking from



## **BAD**

**RELIABILITY.** No matter how good your PC or phone is, sometimes it's gonna freeze. Same goes for the self-driving car.



an autonomous car, potentially causing a rear-end accident. Likewise, when a pedestrian is waiting to cross a road, or is already crossing a road, a human can quickly access whether the pedestrian has seen the vehicle. If a pedestrian is looking the other way, a human will be alert to a potential problem. It's hard to see how an autonomous car will be able to achieve the same level of sophisticated decision making.

- Autonomous cars will need their central control unit, or 'brain', to be 100 per cent reliable and 'freeze-free', something that has not been achieved with PCs, laptops, tablets, or even smartphones to date.

- Advocates of autonomous cars claim that they will be able to 'talk' to each other to help traffic flow. Nice idea, but only if they all have the same operating system with current updates. And, either way, autonomous cars will always have to share the road with conventional vehicles and put up with the foibles and often

inconsistent driving of other road users. Experienced drivers can readily spot an 'idiot' driver and give them a wide berth, but will autonomous cars be that savvy?

- Google is currently leading the way in autonomous car development, but it has zilch experience as a carmaker. Moreover, Google cars will rely on Google Maps for navigation, a critical technology for any autonomous car. Google Maps and its associated sat-nav is poor at the best of times. This doesn't bode well for a Google car being able to find its way, especially away from major population centres.

All of this doesn't mean that autonomous cars or other autonomous vehicles won't feature on our roads sometime in the future. The technology will certainly be useful on something like a bus that follows a fixed route, or in other simple applications where the variables are limited. As for it becoming widespread across all vehicles types, that's something that is, at best, decades away. 🚗

### GOOD

IN a utopian society, the self-driving car would rid the world of traffic congestion. Who actually believes that'll happen, though?

## Follow The Leader

**M**ANY of the technologies that will feature in autonomous cars are already in use and are becoming increasingly common. This includes adaptive cruise control, which automatically limits your vehicle's speed to the speed of the vehicle in front, and will only allow your chosen 'cruise' speed if the lane ahead is clear.

Adaptive cruise control relies on forward-facing radar, also central to the automatic braking systems on many of today's newer cars. With automatic braking, the car will apply the brakes if it perceives a threat that the driver hasn't reacted to.

Other current technologies that will be used on autonomous cars (but in a different role, given there won't be a driver to alert) include blind-spot monitoring and lane-departure monitoring.

On current vehicles all of these technologies have some use, but none are perfect and some are even flawed, so there's some work to do to perfect these basic autonomous vehicle features.





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*Oh what a feeling!*





# Sports Rorts

Mitsubishi has ditched the Challenger for an all-new Pajero Sport to compete in the mid-size 4x4 wagon segment.

WORDS GLENN TORRENS

**M**itsubishi's new Pajero Sport replaces the Challenger and, despite the new-for-Australia name, it shares nothing with its bigger brother Pajero. That's not necessarily a bad thing.

The Sport is available in three models – GLX, GLS and Exceed – and like the two Aussie-market Challenger series before it, they're all five seaters.

Prices for the three models are \$45,000, \$48,500 and \$52,750, which is appealing considering the high level of kit included. However, buyers need to keep in mind that those prices are for five-seater vehicles not seven-seaters – as offered by other brands.

## DRIVELINE AND CHASSIS

Like the two generations of Challenger before it, the Pajero Sport is built on the chassis of the Triton ute rather than the Pajero (although, if you really want to dig deep into the vehicle's



## TOYOTA PRADO 150 GXL D-4D (2.8)

ENGINE	DOHC 16-valve 4-cyl turbodiesel
CAPACITY	2.4-litre (2442cc)
POWER	133kW @ 3500rpm
TORQUE	430Nm @ 2500rpm
GEARBOX	8-speed auto
4X4 SYSTEM	Full-time dual-range with selectable 2WD
CRAWL RATIO	45.90:1
CONSTRUCTION	separate chassis
FRONT SUSPENSION	independent/coil springs
REAR SUSPENSION	live axle/coil springs
WHEEL/TYRE SPEC	265/60R18
KERB MASS	2060kg
GVM	2710kg
PAYLOAD	650kg
TOWING CAPACITY	3100kg
SEATING CAPACITY	Five
FUEL TANK CAPACITY	98litres
ADR FUEL CLAIM	8.0L/100km
ON-TEST CONSUMPTION	N/a
TOURING RANGE*	N/a
PRICE	From \$45,000 plus on-road costs

All the models blasted across the sand dunes.

Equally good on the sand and the bush tracks.

heritage; Tritons, Challengers and Pajeros of the '90s all rolled on the same platform).

Like similar vehicles (Ford Everest, Colorado 7, Isuzu MU-X, Toyota Fortuner), the Pajero Sport runs coil rear springs with its live rear axle; in this case they're set up with a three-link system. It's a simple, durable and compact layout used by Mitsubishi since the Pajero V6 of the late-1980s. The front retains the coil-sprung upper and lower A-arm layout of the Triton but has softer springs for its passenger-carrying role.

The new Sport debuts an AISAN eight-speed automatic transmission behind Mitsubishi's excellent MIVEC (variable-cam timed) 2.4-litre turbo-diesel launched in the 2015 Triton. It offers 133kW at 3500rpm and 430Nm.

Mitsubishi's versatile and well-respected Super Select system allows full-time on-road four-wheel drive operation

as well as the rear-wheel-drive ability of a part-time 4WD system. The oily bits are backed up by a full suite of chassis electronics, too, and new for Mitsubishi are push-button modes to tune the chassis for the terrain. The settings are Gravel (the default setting when 4WD is selected), Mud/Snow and Rock. There's also electronic hill-descent control.

The Exceed does have a rear diff lock, but – with excellent traction control offered – it's hardly needed. However, like the Triton, electronic traction control is disabled when the diff lock is switched on.

## INTERIOR

Mitsubishi sales people will tactfully take you by the elbow and guide you toward a Pajero if you need seven seats and genuine off-road ability, because the Sport, like the Challenger before it, is a five-seater. However, the new model is designed for three-row seating, and

Mitsubishi will be making a seven-seater announcement soon.

Hopefully, it will be an option pack rather than a compulsory purchase as, for many potential buyers, the time-honoured wagon layout with lots of space behind the rear seats, is terrific for carrying camping and sporting gear. Mitsubishi offers a cargo barrier.

The rear seats are split 2/1 and tumble forward easily using one lever per side. People intent on long-term touring will be happy the seats easily unbolt to provide a reasonably flat load area for a gear fit-out. With the dark trim and privacy glass, the Sport feels a little narrower than most wagons in the back seat, and gangly teens will find there's only just room to poke toes under the front seats.

Up front, the centre console is quite high. Mitsubishi explains this adds a premium feel to the cabin, but some of us find the proximity of its hard edges a



Exceed is crawling with creature comforts, including heated front pews and a rear DVD/8-speaker audio system.



little intrusive; the door pulls, too, are a little sharp, although the armrests are soft-touch. Trim is cloth on the GLX and leather on the GLS and Exceed, and front seats feature three-densities of foam for comfort; the foam seems to work better under leather than cloth.

The driver's seat is height-adjustable, but there's no lumbar support. The steering wheel is leather in all models (adjustable for reach and rake) and the instrumentation is clear and concise – including operation of the single- (GLX) and dual-zone climate control system.

The Exceed has blind spot warning, multi-around monitoring and unintended acceleration mitigation – this is all good because the swept-up rear-side window line results in a blind spot big enough to hide a Commodore.

### ON-ROAD

Our first test drive in the Port Stephens area of New South Wales – the Wategans Forest and back to Sydney – included a good dose of freeway and a smaller dose of bumpy back roads. Unfortunately, there wasn't a real lot of open gravel, which will be the natural weekend environment for wagons such as this.

After belting the Sport on the road and on some slower fire tracks, we reckon it will be more Toyota Prado in the gravel-handling stakes than its rally-bred Pajero brother; it won't be quite as confident, with the ride/handling

compromise skewed towards ride.

The engine/trans combo is delightful. Some driveline combos with too many cogs shift and hunt relentlessly, even on the freeway. But this one seeks and holds top gear by 80km/h and doesn't deviate from its locked-in-top 1600-ish revs unless it's given a shove from the right foot or the steering column paddles (or +/- shifter). With the vehicle unloaded, except for two occupants, pedal-to-the-metal reveals an impressive mid-range sprint that will rub off as good towing performance.

That unfussed driveline, Mitsubishi's use of larger rubber body mounts, and the noticeably pillowy suspension that doesn't quite live up to the expectation of the Sport badge contributes to an overall sense of hush and quietness in the cabin that is unfortunately disturbed at about 100km/h by more wind noise than we would expect from an all-new design.

Mitsubishi also claims best-in-class fuel economy of 8.0L/100km combined consumption, though we couldn't test it for ourselves (that will come later).

### OFF-ROAD

Mitsubishi let us loose on the sand of the Worimi Conservation Lands, better known as Stockton Beach, which highlighted the willingness and cog-for-all-occasions character of the Pajero Sport's transmission and engine.


The Sport has good ground clearance,

as well as good approach, ramp-over and departure angles, so it's no surprise it's a competent and confident off-roader in rougher stuff, too.

As mentioned, the Exceed has a rear diff lock, but our off-road time was spent in the base GLX, which performed flawlessly: the tracks we drove on – though admittedly short – saw wheels off the ground on several occasions, revealing how smooth and effective the traction control system is.

It's not mentioned anywhere, but there seems to be a downhill braking strategy – independent of the switchable hill-descent control – that comes into play when descending sand dunes. However, we're not convinced some underbody components will survive gravel rash for too long – there are some components and lines outboard of the chassis rails that will cop a spray from the front wheels. Time will tell, though.

Our test vehicles were wearing Mitsubishi's accessory under-vehicle protection, which, while a nice idea, is more of an early warning system than the bush-tough aftermarket stuff many off-road adventurers are familiar with. There are single recovery points (as well as tie-down loops) front and rear.

Those small comments aside, the Pajero Sport looks like being a winner for Mitsubishi. It's a terrific, if slightly smaller, choice for buyers in the fast-simmering family 4WD market. 



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## FIRST DRIVE

NISSAN NAVARA  
KING & SINGLE CABS

## KING CAB 4X4 ST PICK-UP

ENGINE	2.3-litre diesel twin-turbo
OUTPUT	140kW/450Nm
GEARBOX	6-speed manual (7-speed auto opt.)
PAYLOAD (AUTO)	1002kg (999kg)
TOWING CAPACITY	3500kg
FUEL (AUTO)	6.5L/100km (7.0L)

# New Navaras sprung

Nissan's new Navara NP300 'workhorse' variants are spring-loaded with options designed to appeal to commercial and fleet buyers. But how do the utes go on- and off-road?

Nissan has launched the remaining 13 variants of its Navara NP300 range; nine of which are four-wheel drive; all of which have rear leaf-spring suspension. The new variants include single cab, king cab and dual cab-chassis models and add to the 14 dual cab variants that went on sale in June this year, bringing the total variants on offer to 27. Of these 27 variants, 16 in total are 4x4, three are single cabs, six are king cabs, seven are dual cabs, ten have manual transmissions, and six have automatics. If

you include transmission options, the list of new versions goes up to 20.

What all this means is the Navara now has more variations than ever before and, significantly, the 13 new workhorses that complete the range have returned to a classic leaf-spring suspension set-up at the rear – Nissan's first run of dual cab Navaras bucked the norm in June when they launched with multi-link coil springs instead of leaf-springs at the rear. Also significant, however, is the addition of another engine option for the single cab, dual cab and king cab 4x4 models: they are now available with a single turbo-diesel

engine. Previously, the NP300 had come with an intercooled 2.3-litre bi-turbo-diesel, producing 140kW and 450Nm. The new intercooled 2.3-litre single turbo-diesel produces 120kW at 3750rpm, and 403Nm.

As part of the change, the Navara single cab 4x4s, which all have cab chassis bodies, come only with the single turbos; the RX-spec king cab, available with a pick-up or cab chassis body, also comes with the single turbo; while the higher ST- or ST-X-spec king cab 4x4s each have the bi-turbo.

Even dual cab 4x4 buyers can opt for a single turbo-diesel, with an RX-spec pick-up or cab chassis variant. The RX dual



## SINGLE CAB

SINGLE CAB DX 4X4 DIESEL CAB CHASSIS	\$31,990
SINGLE CAB RX 4X4 DIESEL CAB CHASSIS	\$32,990
SINGLE CAB RX 4X4 DIESEL CAB CHASSIS (A)	\$35,490

## KING CAB

KING CAB RX 4X4 DIESEL PICK-UP	\$36,990
KING CAB ST 4X4 DIESEL PICK-UP	\$42,990
KING CAB ST 4X4 DIESEL PICK-UP (A)	\$45,490
KING CAB ST-X 4X4 DIESEL PICK-UP	\$48,990
KING CAB ST-X 4X4 DIESEL PICK-UP (A)	\$51,490

## DUAL CAB CHASSIS

DUAL CAB RX 4X4 DIESEL CAB CHASSIS	\$38,490
------------------------------------	----------

\*Excludes on-road costs

Firmer suspension means the NP300 drives more like a farm ute.

cab-chassis variant is also the only dual cab offered with leaf rear springs.

Across the 4x4 range, the single turbos are only available with a six-speed manual transmission, except in the dual cab RX pick-up and the single cab RX cab chassis, which each offer the seven-speed automatic as an option. The ADR fuel economy for the single turbo with an automatic is 7.1L/100km, or 6.6L/100km with the manual.

## DRIVE IMPRESSIONS

At the new workhorse range's national launch in Albury, Victoria, 4X4 Australia tested the performance of an ST-spec king cab. The king cab we drove was a bi-turbo variant, with an automatic transmission and a pick-up body; we didn't get to test the single turbo.

But engine options aside, there was still an obvious difference between the new workhorses and the dual cab variants launched earlier this year, and that related to how they handle on- and off-road. Nissan's bold decision to release the first run of NP300s with multi-link coils was thought to indicate market demand for more car-like handling. And as can be expected, the ride in the NP300's leaf-spring variants is not as refined, especially when the ute is unladen.

On bitumen, the ride is firm and at times erratic over inconsistencies, with vibration through the steering wheel and cabin. The firmer ride is a trade-off of having suspension designed to better carry a load (leafs can be more rigid but spread the load widely over the vehicle's chassis, whereas coil springs transfer it to a single point). On dirt, the rear end floats a bit over corrugations, but so will the rear of almost any unladen ute. The ride quality

would no doubt improve with more weight in the back.

For more serious off-roading, we took the king cab to a small 4x4 course with moguls, logs, water, sand and steep rises and descents. Unladen, it handled everything with ease. However, when it came to the logs, the suspension bottomed out if you weren't careful – the leaf springs offer less wheel travel than the coils. For fans of the old D40 leaf springs, the leaf springs on the new NP300 are six kilograms lighter, 24mm shorter and offer better clearance.

Nevertheless, on the surface the new NP300 variants are much the same as the variants released earlier this year. The new appeal of the NP300 range is in the detailed options available to commercial and fleet buyers.

The Navara is already Nissan's best-selling model in Australia, comprising anywhere between 25 and 30 per cent of its annual sales. Nissan hopes this success will continue and the new leaf-sprung model will pick up where the popular Navara D40 and D22 left off.

With the recent launch of the new Toyota Hilux, and the upgrade of the Ford Ranger and Mazda BT-50 – all of which have leaf-sprung rears – Nissan's leaf-spring and single-turbo options should help the company retain its share of the commercial ute market, which demands simplicity, durability and practicality over refinement.

Individual needs will determine whether buyers opt for a manual, an automatic, a single turbo, a bi-turbo, a petrol engine, a diesel engine, a single cab, a dual cab, leaf springs or coil springs.

Nissan has done its best to make sure there is something for everyone. 



1: NP300 leaf springs offer more clearance than the D40;  
2: Simple instrument cluster



## KING CAB 4X4 RX CAB CHASSIS

ENGINE	2.3-litre diesel single
OUTPUT	120kW/403Nm
GEARBOX	6-speed manual
PAYLOAD	1183kg
TOWING CAPACITY	3500kg
FUEL (MAN)	6.6L/100km





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# 4X4

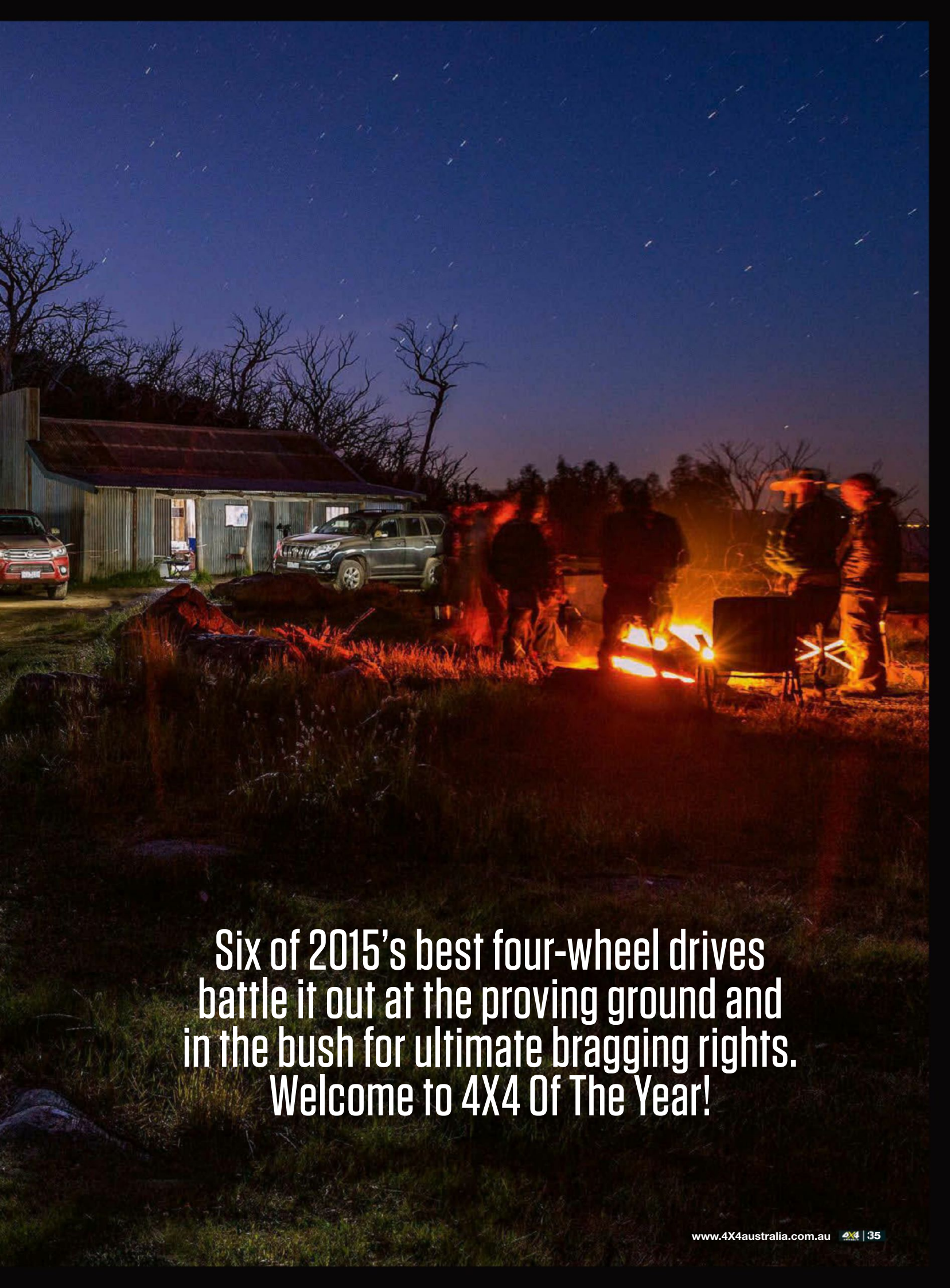
A U S T R A L I A

# OF THE YEAR

PHOTOGRAPHY BY NATHAN JACOBS





A night scene at a proving ground. In the foreground, a large campfire burns brightly, casting a warm glow. Several people are standing around the fire, their silhouettes visible against the flames. To the left, a silver 4x4 vehicle is parked near a small, corrugated metal building. Another 4x4 vehicle is partially visible on the far left. The background shows a dark, starry sky and some bare trees. The overall atmosphere is one of a rugged outdoor adventure.

Six of 2015's best four-wheel drives  
battle it out at the proving ground and  
in the bush for ultimate bragging rights.  
Welcome to 4X4 Of The Year!





# 2015

bred a bumper crop of new four-wheel drive vehicles for us to consider in the 4X4 Of The Year (4X4OTY) arena. 4x4 one-tonne utes were the hottest property on the market, with all the big names being either

replaced by new models or revised. These included Australia's best-selling 4x4, the Toyota Hilux, which was also the most anticipated new model release of the year. There was no question about the Hilux making our list of finalists.

Five of our six finalists were new models, with two of those bringing all-new nameplates to the 4x4 fold – the Ford Everest and Toyota Fortuner. This was refreshing after a period of decline in new 'real' 4x4s and, while they're not proper 4x4s like 70 Series Cruisers, old-school Patrols, or Jeep Wranglers, anything with low range and half-decent ability is okay in this era. The Toyota Prado was the only 'old' vehicle here, but joined the finalists thanks to the inclusion of a new engine and gearbox. It proved it's still a handy tool to have in the shed.

To be in contention for the 4X4OTY title a vehicle must be all-new or have major upgrades such as a new powertrain and/or improved technology.

The field was split 50:50 between utes and wagons this year. The Toyota Hilux, Mitsubishi Triton and Nissan Navara were all-new models, while others in the 4x4 ute class, including the Mazda BT-50 and Ford Ranger, have had only minor updates and didn't qualify for contention.

An interesting point about this year's finalists is that they all have generally affordable price points; no big-dollar pavement pounders made the field this time. The top ticket price was just \$62,000, for the Prado, placing all of these rides in the budget of most new four-wheel drive buyers.

The one significant new luxury 4x4 from 2015 was the Range

Rover Hybrid and, while its manufacturer, Land Rover, claims the hybrid is off-road capable, our testing showed that the benefits of the hybrid powertrain are only felt in urban driving and not when touring or off road. Any of the pure diesel powertrains are still a better call for an off-roading Rangie buyer.

So, with the field of finalists set, we reigned in our panel of expert road testers and took off for a week of tough evaluation. As always, the vehicles were not judged against each other, but against the established 4X4OTY criteria. This is what allows us to test utes alongside wagons, and luxury 4x4s against affordable family rides.

## THE 4X4OTY CRITERIA:

**VALUE FOR MONEY** is judged according to a vehicle's equipment level, safety features and price relative to its direct competitors. Just because a vehicle has a high price doesn't mean it's not good value – in the same way a cheap car isn't always good value.

**BREAKING NEW GROUND** refers to advancements in technology and design – how a vehicle has raised the bar in its class to take 4x4s to a higher level. If a vehicle has the latest safety features, worthy engine technology or an advanced driveline, it will score well in this area.

**BUILT TOUGH** refers to how strong a vehicle is and how well it will cope with the rigours of tough off-road driving environments. Will it be up to the task, or fall apart at the first hurdle?

**BUSHABILITY** is how well a vehicle is equipped for off-road travel. Suitability of the standard tyres for rough roads, touring range, available accessories and underbody protection are just some of the factors considered here. Is this a vehicle you would choose to drive around Australia the rough way, or is it best left to the suburbs and shopping centres?

**DOING THE JOB** is judged according to a vehicle's design brief. Does a luxury vehicle have all the latest in comfort and convenience features, and do they work in the real world? How well a ute carries a load or how well a seven seater accommodates a family will come in to play here.

## THE CONTENDERS

TOYOTA  
**PRADO**

MITSUBISHI  
**TRITON**

TOYOTA  
**FORTUNER**

FORD  
**EVEREST**

NISSAN  
**NAVARA**

TOYOTA  
**HILUX**











## THE CONTENDERS

# FORD EVEREST TREND

The Ford Everest is a new 4x4 wagon based of the Ranger's T6 platform. Not a bad first effort either.

It seems insane that in a country as big as Australia – with a large appetite for four-wheel drive vehicles and miles of unsealed roads – that there has never been a mass-produced 4x4 wagon built here. Who knows, if Ford and Holden had designed and built home-grown 4x4s 20 years ago, they might still be in a position to be making cars here instead of shutting up shop.

Something we can do here and do well is design and engineer cars, and the Everest from Ford is the latest vehicle with roots in Victoria. A continuation of the T6 development, which first spawned the Ford PX Ranger and Mazda BT-50 utes, the Everest is a seven-seat wagon riding on a modified T6 platform. It is built in Thailand along with the Ranger ute.

By modified T6 platform, we mean everything from under the front seats rearwards is new, including the shortened wheelbase (in relation to Ranger) and rear suspension design. We say new as it's new to T6, but the rear end uses a

live axle with coil springs, trailing arms and a Watts link – a design tried and tested in Ford passenger cars for years and well-adapted to the Everest. It works well with the independent coil-sprung front end.

## TOURING

Like Australian-made station wagons of yore, the Everest is a supreme tourer. The torquey 3.2-litre, five-cylinder diesel engine lopes along at a relaxed pace but keeps plenty of muscle tucked up its sleeves for when it's needed. The tweaks Ford has made to the engine for the Everest and upgraded PXII Ranger give it more usable grunt – even though the numbers are no higher – while at the same time it's quieter and more refined. Clever tuning of the fuel system and a smaller turbocharger are to thank for that.

The aforementioned suspension soaks up road bumps, yet it's relatively taught and nimble when compared to other 4x4 wagons in this





The Everest lives up to its name and climbs mountains with ease. Clever calibration of the ETC and a rear diff lock are its key off-road tools.



3.2-litre diesel is relaxed and quiet when cruising, but switch to bush mode and it'll unleash a fury of torque to take you anywhere.



Great driving position and visibility, plenty of passenger space and sufficient niceties – shame about the fiddly HVAC controls.

## SPECIFICATIONS

### FORD EVEREST

ENGINE	DOHC 20-valve 5-cyl diesel
CAPACITY	3.2-litre (3198cc)
POWER	143kW @ 3000rpm
TORQUE	470Nm @ 1750-2500rpm
GEARBOX	6-speed auto
4X4 SYSTEM	Full-time dual-range
CRAWL RATIO	38.6:1
CONSTRUCTION	separate chassis
FRONT SUSPENSION	independent/coil springs
REAR SUSPENSION	live axle/coil springs
WHEEL/TYRE SPEC	265/60R18 110T
KERB MASS	2407kg
GVM	3100kg
PAYLOAD	693kg
TOWING CAPACITY	23000kg
SEATING CAPACITY	seven
FUEL TANK CAPACITY	80 litres
ADR FUEL CLAIM	8.5L/100km
ON-TEST CONSUMPTION	13.0L/100km
TOURING RANGE*	719km
PRICE	\$60,990 (auto only)

\*Based on test consumption and 50km 'safety margin'.

segment. The Everest is no sports car, but it feels like it when you step out of some of the other wagons.

The Everest has an 80-litre fuel tank and an ADR combined fuel figure of 8.5L/100km. On this 4X4OTY test it was the thirstiest vehicle, gulping down a hefty 13.0L/100km over the on- and off-road trial.

The Everest also uses AdBlue to help clean up its emissions, which is stored in an 18-litre tank at the rear of the car. Under normal driving conditions those 18 litres should be good for between 12,000km to 16,000km, so you shouldn't need to worry about it. Drivers doing big mileage or heavy towing may want to carry a top-up bottle of the urea with them.

## TRAIL DRIVING

The Everest feels just as at home running the tracks of the Victorian High Country as it does on the open roads. The view over the big bonnet is good and the driver's seat has plenty of adjustment for different drivers. Unfortunately, though, there is no reach adjustment on the steering column.

The powerful engine requires little throttle on all but the steepest climbs, and the automatic transmission continues its fine job of holding the right gears for the steep descents. There's manual selection via the floor shifter but no column paddles. The suspension still feels firm on the rough stuff, but it's never uncomfortable.

## SET-PIECE HILL CLIMB

With its Multi Terrain Selector left in 'normal' mode, low range selected in the transfer case, 'Drive' nominated in the transmission and the rear diff lock (RDL) engaged, the Ford didn't raise a sweat climbing our steep and rutted hill, and its electronic descent control offered a smooth and seamless ride downhill.

It wasn't so successful without the RDL engaged and couldn't drive up the same line without losing traction. With the RDL in, the Ford keeps its electronic traction control active on the front axle, which is the key to its success here.

The Everest had no clearance issues.



## It might not be manufactured here, but we should be proud of what Ford Australia has done with the Everest



Everest's third-row seat is one of the better ones out there.

### CABIN, EQUIPMENT AND ACCOMMODATION

The Everest is only offered as a three-row seven-seater, and it fills that role well. The rearmost seats will accommodate children and adults for shorter rides, while the other seats are big and roomy. The third row is a bit awkward to access, but not as bad as some we've tested. Both it and the second row fold flat to give a handy cargo area or somewhere you could lay a mattress over to sleep on in camp.

The Everest is well-equipped with standard features including multiple 12-volt and USB power outlets, a 230-volt power outlet, air-con vents right to the back of the car and dual-zone climate control up front. About the only complaint we have about the Everest's cabin are the small, fiddly buttons that control the HVAC and how low they are placed in the centre stack. All our drivers appreciated the big-car feel of the Ford cabin.

### PRACTICALITIES

The 265/60-18 tyre size, as fitted to the Everest Trend, is becoming more common, so there should be reasonable tyre choices available and access to spares in remote areas. Alternatively, you can fit the 17-inch wheels from the base model and open up the next level of choices. The Everest has a full-size matching spare hanging under the back.

Under the bonnet, the engine breathes from over the headlight but via the grille, so it's not a bad set-up. The air cleaner is large and can be serviced without needing tools. The engine bay is pretty busy, so you'll have to find somewhere else for an auxiliary battery or powerpack.

If the position of air intake poses a potential problem for you, Ford offers an accessory snorkel among its extensive range of factory options, which includes bullbars and a luggage carrying kit.

Expecting it to be a popular model, the aftermarket accessory regulars are hard at work producing their catalogues for the Everest, too.

### SUMMARY

The Ford Everest is an exciting new player in the 4x4 wagon segment. It does everything it claims to and does it well; be that ferrying the family, taking on rough and tough terrain or riding with refined comfort.

It brings leading safety and crash-avoidance technology down to a price point not seen before in this segment, making it more accessible to more buyers. It might not be manufactured here, but we should be proud of what Ford Australia has done with the Everest.

As 4X4OTY judge Dean Mellor commented, it has "loads of equipment in a tough package that has obviously been engineered for local Australian conditions".



Showing off its ground clearance.





# 2XL

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#### THE CONTENDERS

## TOYOTA FORTUNER GXL

Fortuner gives buyers of 4x4 wagons an affordable alternative to the Prado, but is it worth your hard-earned?

**T**he Fortuner is another new nameplate for Australia and, like the Everest, it's one that has been used overseas for previous generations of the vehicle. While the Fortuner is new to Australia, it could have easily been called the 4Runner, as it carries on the tradition of that vehicle as a wagon version of the popular Hilux ute. Sound familiar?

With the eighth-generation Hilux also fresh off the boat, Toyota has re-introduced the wagon variant and given it the name used in Asian countries, whereas the US still uses the legendary 4Runner moniker. In line with the latest Hilux, the Fortuner gets the new 2.8-litre four-cylinder 1GD diesel engine with a six-speed auto, or a manual transmission, and part-time 4x4 with a two-speed transfer case.

The Fortuner has a 335mm-shorter wheelbase than the Hilux ute, while multi-links with coil springs at the rear replace the utes leaves, and disc brakes are used in lieu of drums down back.

Toyota has given its wagon bespoke front sheet metal, so the Fortuner isn't instantly recognisable as a Hilux derivative. Inside, there's a different dash treatment to provide a more upmarket feel than that of the workhorse. It has succeeded here, as the cabin has a quality feel and look about it, especially if the brown seat trim colour grows on you.

There are more soft-touch points around the cabin than in the Hilux (and other wagons in the segment) to give a premium feel, even in the mid-spec GXL variant we had at 4X4OTY.

#### TOURING

Toyota has delivered a sweet suspension tune on the Fortuner, giving it a relaxed and comfortable ride over broken back-country and gravel roads.

The engine has adequate power, but it's no missile and you find it lacking when you want to overtake from around 80-90km/h – the go pedal doesn't seem to want to go down far enough.





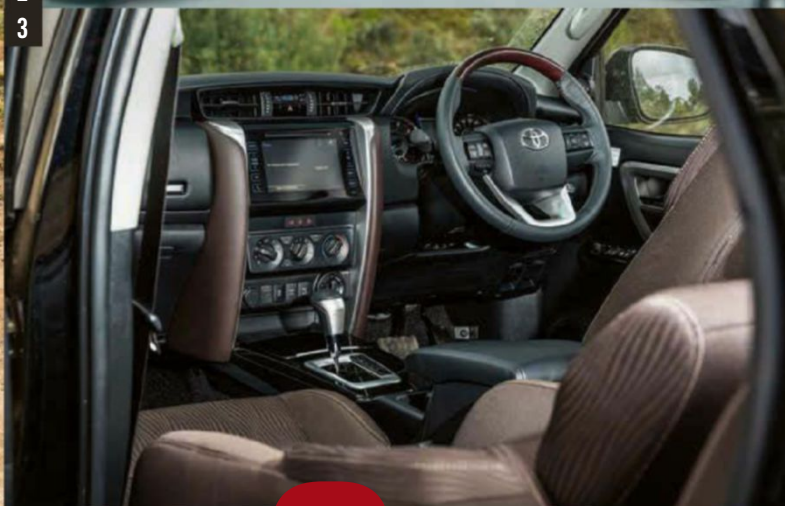
1

Toyota's engineers have done a top job on the ETC calibrations in the latest models. It almost makes the Fortuner's rear diff lock redundant.



2  
3

Instrument cluster indicates fuel usage stats, trip distance and outside temperature – among other things.



3

You grow to like the brown seats, though the lack of sat-nav and climate control in GXL trim is a shortcoming.

## SPECIFICATIONS

### TOYOTA FORTUNER

ENGINE	DOHC 16-valve 4-cyl turbodiesel
CAPACITY	2.8-litre (2755cc)
MAX POWER	130kW @ 3400rpm
MAX TORQUE (MAN)	420Nm @ 1400-2600rpm
MAX TORQUE (AUTO)	450Nm @ 1600-2400rpm
GEARBOX(S)	6-speed man/6-speed auto
4X4 SYSTEM	part-time dual-range
CRAWL RATIO MAN/AUTO	44.0:1/36.1:1
CONSTRUCTION	separate chassis
FRONT SUSPENSION	independent/coil springs
REAR SUSPENSION	live axle/coil springs
TYRE SIZE (GX/GLX)	265/65R17 112S
TYRE SIZE (CRUSADE)	265/60 R18 110H
KERB MASS	2110-2135kg
GVM	2750Kg
PAYLOAD	615-640kg
TOW RATING MAN/AUTO	3000kg/2800kg
GCM MAN/AUTO	5745kg/5545kg
SEATING CAPACITY	seven
FUEL TANK CAPACITY	80 litres
FUEL USE ON TEST	11.8L/100km
ADR FUEL USE AUTO	8.6L/100km
PRICE	\$54,990 (inc auto)

The Fortuner is geared very tall for fuel economy, and out on the open highway the engine ticks over at around 1300rpm. As a result, the six-speed auto willingly shifts back a cog at the mere hint of an incline, and that makes it feel busy at times as it hunts for a ratio and converter lock-up. It's also annoying on arterial roads when it drops to top gear/locked converter at 80km/h and the engine thrums and drones at such low revs.

On test, the Fortuner sipped 11.8L/100km (on the back of an 8.6L/100km official rating). It has an 80-litre fuel tank, so it offers a good highway touring range.

### TRAIL DRIVING

With just a part-time 4x4 system to work with, you need the centre diff locked any time you are in four-wheel drive, which can be annoying when you have tight manoeuvring, multi-point turns or varying sealed/unsealed roads to contend with. The electronic traction control does an excellent job of keeping drive to the wheels with grip, regardless of the surface or incline.

Low-speed punch from the engine is

always on tap; the auto is quick to shift back to control-descent speeds even when you leave it in drive or use the paddle shifters; visibility over the bonnet is good; and all-in-all the Fortuner's extremely capable on the tracks.

### SET-PIECE HILL CLIMB

The way we tackle our rutted climb is to use every piece of tractive weaponry a car has on offer. We then run each car up the same straight line through the deepest parts of the ruts. The idea is that if you employ all the kit available, you're giving the vehicle the best chance of making the climb. For the Fortuner, and most of the cars on this test, that meant using low range with the rear diff lock (RDL) engaged.

To our surprise, the Fortuner struggled with its RDL engaged – the rear wheels spun excessively, slewing the car off track and kicking up a dust storm. It made it up, but only when driven off the hard line.

We then disengaged the RDL and, lo and behold, the electronic traction control made the climb look easy. The Fortuner got to the top with no wheel spin, no fuss



## Heavy-duty protection plates under the Fortuner are a nice touch, as are front and rear tow hooks

Toyota's tablet-style audio units look flash but are a PITA to use.

and no sweat. In the name of durability, Toyota has designed the car to disable ETC when the RDL is engaged, but it's done such a top job calibrating the ETC that we were left wondering if there's a use for a diff lock at all.

### CABIN, EQUIPMENT AND ACCOMMODATION

The Fortuner cabin has a premium look and feel about it. That said, a few of our testers found that the driver's seat was too small in the squab; we were surprised there was no climate control air-con and no sat-nav in GXL trim; and everyone hated the omission of the volume dial for the audio system, as the buttons on the tablet-style unit are fiddly and slow to use.

The third-row seats fold up to the sides of the cargo area and infringe on space when not in use. The seats are okay for kids but not as comfortable as those in the Everest, and the small rear windows restrict the vision of anyone sitting back there. The absence of any tie-down points in the cargo area is also a huge negative.

Power-wise, there is a 12-volt outlet and a USB outlet up front, a 220-volt outlet in the console and another 12-volt outlet in the back. Just be careful if you're plugging your car fridge in the back, as there's nothing to safely tie it down to.

### PRACTICALITIES

265/65R17s, as fitted to the GXL, are one of the

most common 4x4 tyre sizes, so there are plenty of options available just about anywhere. But your smile will fade if you want to go up a size, as the Fortuner and Hilux have very limited space in the wheel wells. Even a 265/70 will scrub on vehicles with a legal suspension lift. Without extensive modifications, you can forget about big tyres on these new Toyotas.

There's space in the engine bay for a second battery and probably a third if you wanted one. The air cleaner is a good size and accessible without tools, and it sucks via the inner 'guard. Toyota offers a factory snorkel among a massive range of off-road accessories, and the clever aftermarket companies already have ranges of off-road gear available. Heavy-duty protection plates under the Fortuner are a nice touch from Toyota, as are front and rear tow hooks.

### SUMMARY

Roothy reckons: "The Fortuner is going to make someone somewhere very happy, but in this pack it's lost by Prado's perfection and Ford's form. It's a great vehicle, but I'm not sure why Toyota bothered."

That pretty much sums up what most of us thought: the Fortuner does what you expect of it but doesn't shine in any particular area. It's no Prado! Of more concern, though, was the lack of equipment and mediocre highway performance that let down an otherwise neat package.



Third-row seats can be folded but eat space.







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## THE CONTENDERS

# TOYOTA HILUX SR5

When the best-selling 4x4 in the land gets a new model, you take notice. Hiluxes sell like cold beer for a reason!

Approaching half a century of Hilux production, Toyota has delivered its eighth-generation Hilux workhorse and – as was the case with each new generation before it – it's more passenger car-like, more functional and more capable than its predecessor. As the best-selling 4x4 vehicle in Australia in 2014 (it's shaping up to take that gong again in 2015), a new Hilux is big news for 4x4 buyers, and the new model was one of the most keenly anticipated launches of the year. Toyota made us wait, as it was the last of the new and updated utes to hit the market in 2015.

The wait was worth it. While the Hilux doesn't raise the bar in the one-tonne ute segment, it has caught up with the competition, and the new model surpasses the old model both on- and off-road. The new Hilux ticks all the boxes; with its new 2.8-litre 1GR diesel engine; new six-speed transmissions; longer-travel suspension for better off-road ability; vastly improved

electronic chassis and traction aids; heavier-load and towing capacities to match the class leaders; and a more modern look inside and out.

The model supplied for 4X4OTY was the double-cab SR5 auto, with the optional leather seats pack.

## TOURING

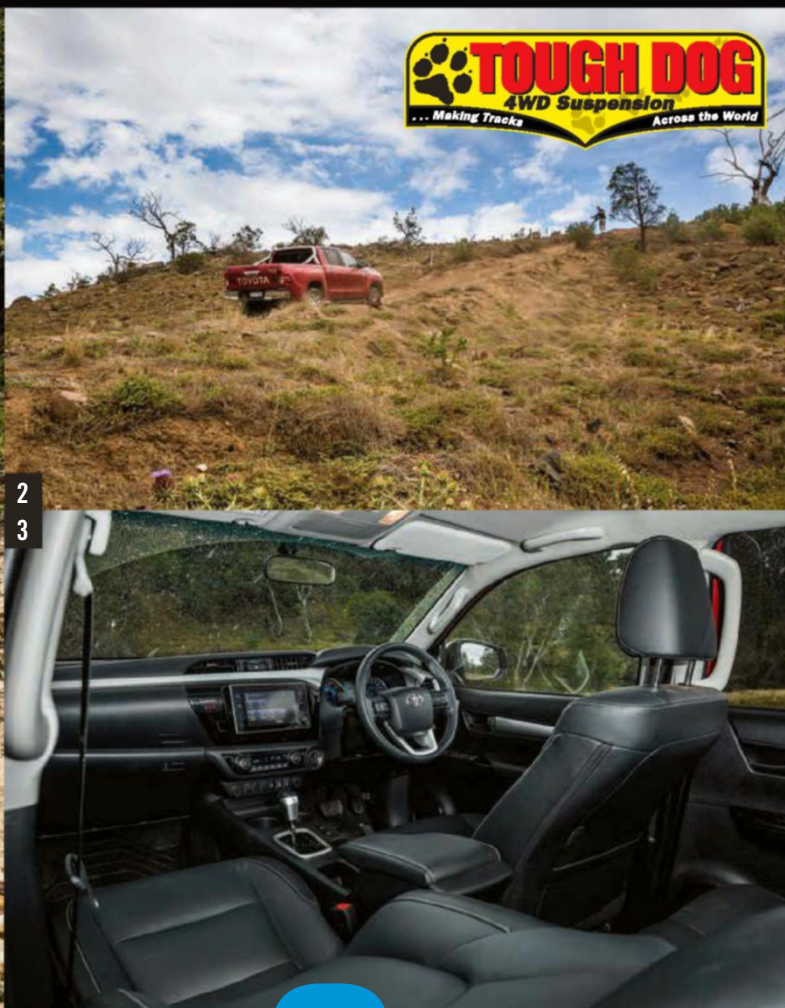
The first thing you notice about the latest Hilux is that it has a more modern and accommodating interior. It is more passenger car-like and better suited to long-haul driving with the family on board, especially in this top-spec model.

Drive away, however, and you're instantly reminded that this is a load-hauling truck. The rear suspension is firm and jittery on poor and broken road surfaces – to the point of being downright uncomfortable. This is worse at low speeds, but it gets better as you go faster. From past experience, it isn't such a problem with a load in the tray.





An off-road juggernaut thanks to heavy-duty leaf springs at the rear and a great traction control system.



Heavier payload and towing capacities will keep the Hilux a favourite with farmers. Not so sure about the leather seats of the SR5+ model.



A plush and comfortable passenger-car-like cabin is let down by the awkward-to-use tablet. But it's still flash for a work truck.

## SPECIFICATIONS

### TOYOTA HILUX SR5 DUAL CAB (2.8D AUTO)

ENGINE	DOHC 16-valve 4-cyl turbodiesel
CAPACITY	2.8-litre (2755cc)
POWER	130kW @ 3400rpm
TORQUE	450Nm @ 1600-2400rpm
GEARBOX	6-speed auto
4X4 SYSTEM	part-time dual-range
CRAWL RATIO	36.1:1
CONSTRUCTION	separate chassis
FRONT SUSPENSION	independent/coil springs
REAR SUSPENSION	live axle/leaf springs
WHEEL/TYRE SPEC	alloy/265/60R18
KERB MASS	2125kg
GVM	3050kg
PAYLOAD	925kg
TOWING CAPACITY	3200kg
SEATING CAPACITY	five
FUEL TANK CAPACITY	80 litres
ADR FUEL CLAIM	8.5L/100km
PRICE	\$57,990 (inc auto and leather seats)

\*Based on test fuel use, claimed fuel-tank capacity and a 50km 'safety' margin.

The 1GR-FTV engine is adequate but no rocket ship, and the six-speed auto can get busy over undulating highway as it hunts for the most efficient cog. Interestingly, the Hilux consumed 11.8L/100km – the same amount of diesel as the Fortuner on test. Its official ADR figure is 8.5L/100km, and the tank holds 80 litres of fuel.

## TRAIL DRIVING

As expected, the Hilux applies itself well to off-road tracks. It has the same powertrain and part-time 4x4 system as the Fortuner. Visibility is good, performance is adequate and the traction control system is excellent.

We might have expected the longer wheelbase of the ute to smooth out the ride a bit, but the heavy-duty leaf springs under the back counter that idea.

## SET-PIECE HILL CLIMB

Just like what happened with the Fortuner, the ETC did a far better job of getting the Toyota up our rutted hill than the rear diff lock did. This is because the RDL cancels out the ETC and limits your traction aids to just the rear axle. It feels like a rear-drive-

only car with the diff lock engaged and struggles to climb. The longer wheelbase did do it some favours here, but that had more to do with the spacing of the ruts and holes in the track.

In low range, first-gear engine braking provides nice downhill control and the auto SR5 also gets downhill-assist control, which seems to do its job well, too.

## CABIN, EQUIPMENT AND ACCOMMODATION

The Hilux now has a much more comfortable and passenger car-like interior and that's a good and a not-so-good thing. While all of our judges appreciate the added comfort and functionality, none of them liked the tablet-style media screen and its fiddly buttons – reflections on the screen's surface also make it hard to see its display. The way it's placed on the dash makes it seem like it was an afterthought.

A few of our drivers also criticised the grab handle on the driver's-side roof. It almost knocked a couple of us out when we banged our heads on it at different times when driving over rough terrain. It isn't





**It's a leap ahead of the previous model, and will remain the biggest seller, thanks to its legendary reputation**

700mm wading depth is great but just falls short of the class leader.

needed there, or at least it could be a folding one that sits flush when it's not being used.

There is plenty of power available in the SR5 cab – two 12-volt outlets and a single USB outlet up front, and a 220-volt outlet in the console. The fold-out shopping bag holders on the backs of the front seats are another nice and very useful touch. The seats are small but comfortable, and rear-seat accommodation is good. Our taller drivers felt that the steering wheel reach didn't come out far enough, but at least the Hilux now has reach adjustment, unlike some utes.

## PRACTICALITIES

The SR5 wears 18-inch alloy wheels and 265/60R-18 tyres but happily accepts the 17s that are fitted to lower-grade models, or aftermarket wheels, offering more tyre choices. Like the Fortuner, the Hilux has very limited space inside the front 'guards, so fitting larger tyres is an issue, but we expect the aftermarket to come up with some fixes for that.

The SR5 has a smooth-sided cargo tub without the external tie-off points that the Workmate and SR models have. That can be good or bad, depending on your use of the vehicle. Inside the tub there is a hitch point at each corner, but they are placed halfway up the sides rather than at the bottom, which is where you'd ideally want

them. A few of our judges commented that they would expect a tub liner as standard at this top-spec price point.

The engine bay is the same as the Fortuner's, so there's plenty of space for accessories. The air cleaner is easy to access and breathes through the inner 'guard, and the underbody protection is substantial. The inclusion of an additional fuse block for accessories shows that Toyota is thinking of its end user, although the terminals used are not a common type. Toyota will happily sell you factory accessories such as a snorkel, lights, winch and bullbar.

## SUMMARY

While the new Hilux is a leap ahead of the previous model in most ways, it still hasn't taken the segment by the horns, let alone advanced it.

Sure, it will still be the biggest-seller, thanks to its legendary reputation and its thousands of fleet and business buyers, but Toyota has simply caught up with the competition, rather than surpassing it. While other markets for the Hilux have got new tech including emergency autonomous braking and crawl control, Toyota Australia is holding back on those features for its buyers. But that won't stop the Hilux selling its arse off and potentially being the best-selling car in the country in 2016.



High tie points in the tubs of utes are poorly placed.





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## THE CONTENDERS

# NISSAN NAVARA STX

Nissan thought outside the box for its new Navara, with coil-spring rear suspension and a bi-turbo diesel donk.

**N**issan threw tradition to the wind when it launched the NP300, or D23 Navara, midway through 2015. While many will tell you a load-lugging ute needs leaf springs under its tray, forward-thinking companies such as Land Rover have proven otherwise, opting for coils and links on the rear axle. Nissan became the first to apply this to a mainstream one-tonne ute when it released the coil-sprung NP300 double-cab models, though the single and king cabs retain leaf springs.

Nissan also used the new model to release a new high-tech diesel engine. It's a relatively small 2.3-litre unit with a pair of turbochargers that boost power and torque numbers to competitive heights. The Navara at 4X4OTY was a top-of-the-range STX double cab, equipped with the seven-speed auto transmission.

## TOURING

With Navara's coiled-for-comfort-and-compliance rear end, it's a smoother tourer than most other one-tonne utes. The coils ride over bumps better and grant more control of the rear axle over uneven road surfaces and corrugations. Axle tramp when accelerating out of corners is more controlled than it is in leaf springs, but the improvement is not the huge a leap forward you might expect.

Nissan still had to spring the coils stiff enough to carry loads and hasn't reduced its payload capacity. But, from our experience, the coiled Navaras don't like half a tonne in the tray.

The little 2.3-litre mill powers along thanks to 450Nm, which is enough to compete with the bigger engines in the class. The four-cylinder engine is a bit harsh and noisy when you ask it





Low ground clearance and a wading depth of 450mm mean the Navara must remain in the shallow end.



New high-tech diesel engine developed by Nissan utilises a pair of snails to boost power and torque.



Interior is the Navara's strong point. Plenty of space and quality finishes. It is the range-topper, after all.

## SPECIFICATIONS

### NISSAN NAVARA NP300 ST

ENGINE	2.3 litre 4-cyl bi-turbo-diesel
MAX POWER/TORQUE	140kW/450Nm
GEARBOX	seven-speed automatic
4X4 SYSTEM	dual-range part-time
KERB WEIGHT	1865kg
GVM	2910kg
PAYLOAD	1045kg
TOWING CAPACITY	3500kg
GCM	5910kg
FUEL TANK CAPACITY	80 litres
ADR FUEL CONS	7.0 litres/100km
PRICE	\$54,490 (inc auto)

\* Automatic bi-turbo 4x4 Dual-Cab Pick-Ups only. Manual saves \$2500.



to deliver its best performance, but this is a light truck after all. It's well-assisted by the seven-speed automatic transmission, which is far better calibrated than the last seven-speeder in Nissan's old Navara TDV6 550. This one will hold the gears you manually select, but it's not always happy to select the ratios you want.

11.7 litres of sweet diesel fuel went through the Nissan mill for every 100km, making it one of the more frugal cars along for the ride. The official figure sits at 7.0L/100km.

A plus for touring in the STX is its spacious, well-appointed interior, which was a favourite with all of our judges.

## TRAIL DRIVING

The Navara is probably the lowest ute in its class and was the first to bump and grind over rocks and ruts on this drive. It's certainly a contender for a suspension lift if you're going to take it off-road regularly.

We also found the front end to be noisy when cornering on gravel roads. The low height is also a concern for water crossings; Nissan only quotes a 450mm wading depth,

as opposed to 800mm for the class leader.

The engine and transmission work well on hilly terrain, holding the gears as mentioned, and the vehicle always has enough power on tap thanks to the complex bi-turbo set-up.

## SET-PIECE HILL CLIMB

Ground clearance was again the demon when it came to the rutted hill climb: the Navara scraped its undercarriage more than any other car.

The STX comes with a rear diff lock, which keeps the ETC active even when the RDL is engaged. It needed it, too, because, even with the diff lock in, it scrambled and struggled to make it up. There was no chance of it going up without the RD, as the ETC couldn't keep up.

The NP300 is better suited to all road touring than heavy-duty off-road driving.

## CABIN, EQUIPMENT AND ACCOMMODATION

The strong point of the STX is its cabin. Comfortable, spacious, well-appointed – it's what you expect of a top-of-the-range





Nissan has pioneered the coil-sprung rear end for a one-tonne ute.

## Small motor, big heart, even bigger cabin. It's so well thought-out in the detailed stuff that it'll make heaps of friends in the real world

model. The lounge-like, heated, power-adjustable leather front seats are just the tip of the iceberg, as there's also sat-nav, climate control and more – it even has a power-opening rear window to the cargo tray, which some of our judges reckon is a good thing.

Lack of reach adjustment for the steering column is an oversight in any new vehicle, but the Nissan tiller feels nice in your hands.

Despite its big feel, the rear seat doesn't work so well for three passengers across, although it does fold up nicely for extra flat stowage space.

Navara passengers have to make do with just one 12-volt outlet and one USB power outlet.

### PRACTICALITIES

A boon for previous STX Navara owners was the car's unique 'Utili-Track' adjustable cargo restraint system in the tub. Utili-Track rails used to be on both the sides of the tub and on the tub floor, giving the best factory tie-down points on offer. Unfortunately, the floor rails are now left out and the side rails are up high on the sides, so you can't tie anything down in the tub. The tub is

still big and does come with a protective liner.

The STX wears 255/60-R18 rubber; has two tie-down/tow points at the front but none at the rear; and the air intake breathes above the headlight, which doesn't help the relatively low wading depth. There's no space to easily fit a second battery in the engine bay.

### SUMMARY

"Small motor, big heart, even bigger cabin," is what John Rooth said about the STX. "The Navvy is a tad soft off-road but so well thought-out in the detailed stuff that it'll make heaps of friends in the real world."

That's it – the Navara is well-appointed and goes alright, but when the going gets tough it is let down, whether by its ground clearance or its ability to carry a heavy load in the tub. The steering feel was also criticised, as it is heavy and unwieldy – it feels like you have two flat front tyres.

Full marks to Nissan for thinking outside the square; unfortunately, the execution isn't quite what it could and should be.



Utili-Tracks high on the sides, but what about on the floor, Nissan?





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### DUAL INPUT OPERATION

Simultaneous automatic charging from both solar and smart/conventional alternator (9-32V) inputs



### 25A SOLAR MPPT

Can operate as a 25A MPPT solar controller, eliminating the need for a separate controller



### -10°C — 80°C OPERATION

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### TEMPERATURE COMPENSATION

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## THE CONTENDERS

# TOYOTA PRADO GXL

The old Prado keeps on keeping on, even with a smaller 2.8-litre engine fitted to it in its latest update.

In a year of all-new-vehicle abundance, the Toyota Prado was the only simply-updated four-wheel drive to make our list of finalists.

Toyota's 2.8-litre 1GD-FTV engine is now the go-to mill for the company's smaller 4x4s and has been transplanted, along with a new six-speed automatic transmission, to the Prado, bringing more power, torque and, significantly, improved refinement to the popular family wagon.

Toyota didn't do much else to the Prado. The mid-spec GXL model, as tested here, now gets sat-nav as standard, while the top-spec Kakadu gets some fresh safety tech. Otherwise, it's business as usual and that's not such a bad thing.

### TOURING

The 120 Series and the more-recent 150 Series Prados have always been supreme tourers, and there's no reason to change that for the updated model. The Prado has plenty of interior space; compliant suspension that gives a silky, though sometimes wallowing, ride; and a no-frills level of specification. These ingredients are just right

for a long-road hauler. The improved NVH, and hence refinement of the freshly fitted engine, just adds to the perfect recipe.

Throw in an unmatched 150 litres of fuel capacity and the Prado beats any standard vehicle for touring range. The Prado needs that capacity, too, as it was the thirstiest car at 4X4OTY, gulping down 13.5L/100km, yet it still runs the longest between fill-ups. The official figure for the auto wagon is 8.0L/100km.

The new six-speed transmission gives a second overdrive for highway touring, but tends to search between fifth and sixth at 100km/h.

### TRAIL DRIVING

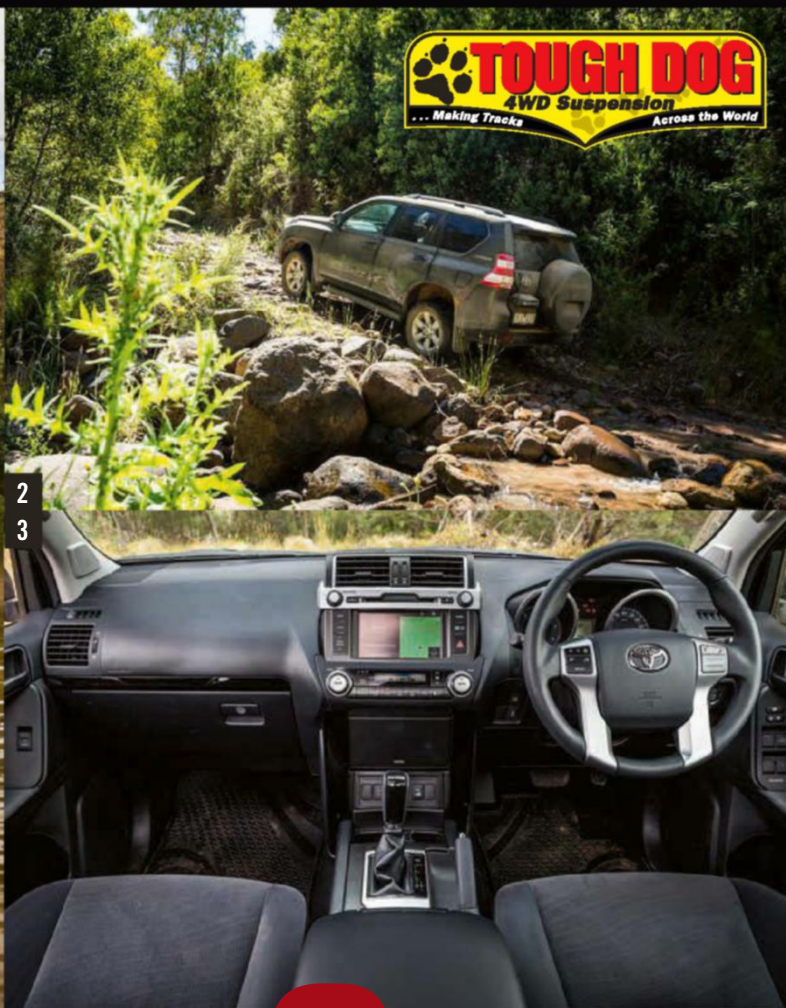
The supple suspension, big cabin and commanding view of the track ahead make the Prado just as dominant on the tracks as it is on the open roads. The Toyota is really at home here and the rougher it gets the happier it seems to be. The high-riding wagon is never challenged for clearance and its long-travel rear end tackled the toughest tracks the High Country could







A wading depth of 700mm and a ground clearance of 220mm mean Prado can go places most others can't.



Only the top-spec Kakadu gets a rear diff lock, so the GXL model makes do with an older ETC system.



The cabin might be plain and simple, but everything feels comfy and just works ... like an old pair of jeans.

## SPECIFICATIONS

### TOYOTA PRADO 150 GXL

ENGINE	DOHC 16-valve 4-cyl turbodiesel
CAPACITY	2.8-litre (2755cc)
POWER	130kW @ 3400rpm
TORQUE	450Nm @ 1600-2400rpm
GEARBOX	6-speed auto
4X4 SYSTEM	Full-time dual-range
CRAWL RATIO	36.1:1
CONSTRUCTION	separate chassis
FRONT SUSPENSION	independent/coil springs
REAR SUSPENSION	live axle/coil springs
WHEEL/TYRE SPEC	265/65R17 112S
KERB MASS	2205kg
GVM	2900kg
PAYLOAD	695kg
TOWING CAPACITY	2500kg
SEATING CAPACITY	seven
FUEL TANK CAPACITY	150 litres
ADR FUEL CLAIM	8.0L/100km
ON-TEST CONSUMPTION	13.5L/100km
TOURING RANGE*	1292km
PRICE	\$61,990 (inc auto)

\*Based on test consumption and 50km 'safety margin'.

throw at the showroom-spec cars.

As seen in the Hilux and Fortuner, the new 2.8-litre/six-speed powertrain was flawless in this terrain, although it requires a heavy stomp on the throttle to get it up steeper hills.

### SET-PIECE HILL CLIMB

Speaking of hills, on the rutted climb at the Melbourne 4x4 Proving Ground, the Prado put that plentiful rear-wheel travel to good use to conquer the climb. It needs it, too, as there is no rear diff lock (RDL) in this spec Prado (it's in Kakadu-spec only) and the ETC feels a generation or two older than that in the new Fortuner and Hilux. The ETC pulsed and grinded its way up the hill but got the Prado there in the end.

As expected, there are no clearance issues for the Prado, and low range, first gear, is all you need for a controlled descent – no electronic wizardry required!

### CABIN, EQUIPMENT AND ACCOMMODATION

It's always nice to jump in to the cabin of a decent-sized 4x4, and the Prado just makes the mark here. It is so much more accommodating







Long-distance touring is what the Prado does best.

## A fantastic driving range, impressive off-road capability and superb on-road comfort make it one of the best touring wagons on the market

than any of the 4x4 utes or their wagon derivatives, with a seating position that only a bespoke wagon body can deliver. In fact, on a few occasions our judges mentioned the seating position in the Prado as a positive.

The Prado isn't left wanting for much, even if the GXL's cabin is pretty basic and the inclusion of standard sat-nav barely makes up for the fact that, spec-for-dollar, the Toyota is trumped by its newest competitor, the Ford Everest. Sure, the Prado is basic, but it does everything it needs to and it all feels good quality and easy to use. Maybe that's just the familiarity of the ageing model.

The GXL offers rear seat control for the climate control and has vents right through to the rearmost seats, which are best left for the kids on short trips. The Prado also has tie-down points in the cargo area, unlike its new sibling. There's a 12-volt outlet, a USB outlet and a 220-volt outlet in the cabin.

### SUMMARY

Even as the highest-priced car in this bunch, the Prado GXL is still an affordable family 4x4. It does everything asked of it without fuss or fanfare and is a near-on perfect blank canvas on which to create a long-distance tourer.

About the only criticisms the Prado scored from the judges centred on its looks and its dopey-eyed front-end treatment, but the Prado has never been a looker. It just gets the job done without being pretty, and that's what so many people find appealing about it.

One of our judges at 4X4OTY must be one of those people, as he gave the Prado the highest score among the finalists.

Dean Mellor summed up the Prado by saying: "It ain't pretty, but a fantastic driving range, impressive off-road capability and superb on-road comfort combine to make the Prado one of the best long-distance touring wagons on the market". 'Nuff said!



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## THE CONTENDERS

# MITSUBISHI TRITON EXCEED

Good things often come in small packages. Mitsubishi's MQ Triton proves the point and does it for a good price.

**B**igger is not always better. Well, so said Mitsubishi when it launched its new MQ Triton ute in the middle of the year. While other utes have grown in size and stature, Mitsubishi chose to keep its truck compact, claiming that there are buyers out there who appreciate the smaller vehicle.

Looking at Mitsubishi's sales numbers, you might think the company was right, as the Triton has been a strong seller through the back half of 2015 – but the numbers don't tell the whole story. Regardless of size, buyers appreciate bang for their bucks, and the Triton remains a great value-for-money package. That's why we requested a top-spec Triton Exceed for 4X4OTY contention – as, for \$48,000, the well-equipped Mitsubishi can save buyers close to \$10,000 over other similarly equipped utes.

"Buy a Triton and put the money you save into a trip around Australia," Roothy quipped.

## TOURING

The Triton is still only one of two 4x4 utes available with the option of full-time four-wheel drive. While some might dismiss this as 'so what?', the benefits of being able to seamlessly travel on gravel roads then on to sealed roads and back again – without having to shift between two- and four-wheel drive – needs to be experienced. It just makes life much easier, especially with electronically-selected transfer cases that don't always co-operate with requests.

With its more refined, smaller yet more powerful 2.4-litre engine, the Triton punts along nicely on the highways, with the calibration of the five-speed auto now better than it was before. Interestingly, it never feels like it wants another ratio in the 'box. The Exceed also has paddle shifters for the transmission and is one of the few cars in which the paddles are fixed to the column and don't turn with the steering





1

1

A wading depth of 500mm puts it down the shallow end in this company.



**TOUGH DOG**  
4WD Suspension  
... Making Tracks  
Across the World

2

3

2

Forget shifting between two-wheel and four-wheel drive. Simply leave the tarmac and hit the dirt ... at speed.



3

Smaller cabin than the comp, but it's not lacking niceties. Big sat-nav screen is easy to use. Leather seats, too.

## SPECIFICATIONS

### MITSUBISHI TRITON EXCEED

ENGINE	2.4 litre 4-cyl turbo-diesel
MAX POWER/TORQUE	133kW/430Nm
GEARBOX	five-speed automatic
4X4 SYSTEM	dual-range full-time (+2WD)
KERB WEIGHT	1950kg
GVM	2900kg
PAYLOAD	950kg
TOWING CAPACITY	3100kg
GCM	5885kg
FUEL TANK CAPACITY	75 litres
ADR FUEL CONS	7.6L/100km
FUEL CONS ON TEST	11.6L/100km
PRICE	\$47,490 (auto only)



wheel. That is what you want in a 4x4 with steering that needs multiple turns, lock-to-lock. The short-travel suspension makes the Triton feel almost rally-inspired and more dynamic than most others.

The Triton's the most frugal diesel sipper of the group, consuming 11.6L/100km on our test – 7.6L/100 is the ADR figure.

## TRAIL DRIVING

Again, having Super Select and full-time 4x4 is a huge plus when travelling in the alps or anywhere with tight tracks, or when manoeuvring in small spaces. Having drive to all four wheels without the centre diff locked makes this so much easier. It leaves us wondering why none of the other new utes have adopted a similar system to this (or Volkswagen Amarok's system).

The Triton's shorter wheelbase and overall size, compared to its competition, helps here, too, making the Mitsubishi more nimble. It's easy to see over the bonnet, too.

## SET-PIECE HILL CLIMB

Another thing that leaves us scratching our heads is why Mitsubishi now only offers

the rear diff lock in the top-sped Triton Exceed. The Triton couldn't overcome the first challenge at the base of our hill when we left it to the electronic traction control alone, yet it was able to scabble its way up with the RDL engaged. We guess it's just as well the Exceed is relatively cheap, so more buyers might choose it or save the money for aftermarket lockers.

Relatively short wheel travel doesn't help the Mitsubishi, and it hung wheels in the air more than the others. Manoeuvrability came to the fore again, making the Triton the easiest to turn around at the top of the hill, before bumping and scraping its way back down.

## CABIN, EQUIPMENT AND ACCOMMODATION

As the top of the Triton range, the Exceed gets all the fruit, which makes it such good value at less than \$50,000. Leather seats; big screen sat-nav; quality fit and feel; and tilt-and-reach adjustment on the steering column all add up to a sweet package.

As you would expect, the cabin is a bit smaller than other dual-cab utes, especially





The small and nimble Triton is a bargain.

## It's different and it's great value. If you don't need or want a bigger ute, then the Triton is worth checking out

across the back seat. There is also just one 12-volt outlet and one USB outlet for power.

### PRACTICALITIES

The Triton comes with a tub liner to protect the back, but the load-securing points are too high to usefully tie down anything back there. The fact that the whole load area is behind the rear axle is also a concern when carrying a heavy load. Maybe that's why the Triton has a lower GVM and towing capacity than the bigger utes.

The engine breathes through the inner 'guard, which is a step in the right direction for Mitsubishi. You might be able to get an auxiliary battery in the engine bay, but you would need to relocate some parts.

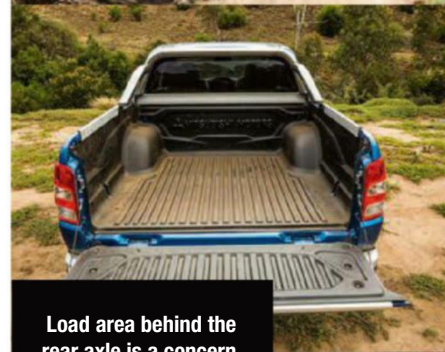
The Triton wears relatively small 245/65R-17 rubber but readily accepts bigger tyres. A few of our testers commented on the odd-looking alloy wheels, saying the design looked like high-heeled boots spinning around.

### SUMMARY

The Triton provides a true alternative in the 4x4 ute segment. It's different and it's a great-value option – not a bad one either, if it floats your boat. If you don't need or want a bigger ute, then the Triton is worth checking out. It's a big improvement on the superseded model.

We had a small problem regarding an item that was subject to a vehicle recall earlier in the year – our vehicle obviously hadn't been attended to. The problem relates to the accessory tonneau cover and the rivets that hold its mounts on. On our test vehicle, these had ripped out and Dave Morley had to patch it all up before we set out.

Still, he said of the Exceed that it's "sportier to drive than the other utes (or anything else here) and sensational value." But he also said it "lacks that last little chunk of mountain-goat DNA, and the tonneau rails and front fascia both fell apart."



Load area behind the rear axle is a concern.





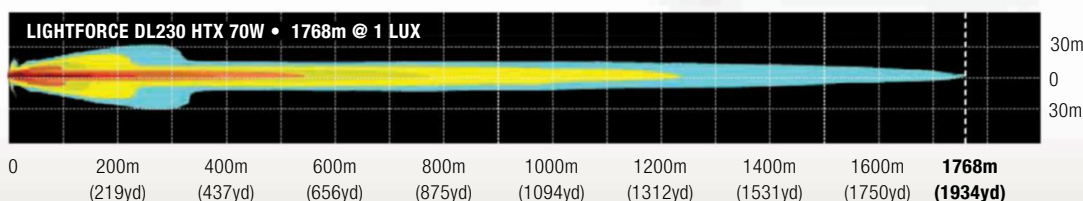
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RON MOON

# TESTING TRACKS

The 4X4OTY test route must challenge each vehicle's individual capabilities. To do this we took on some of the best tracks in the Victorian High Country.

**A**fter two testing days at the Melbourne 4x4 Training and Proving Ground, we had a fair idea of our six 4X4OTY contenders' capabilities. Here we drove each vehicle back-to-back on the same lines over the same challenging obstacles, to give us an idea of each vehicle's suspension flexibility, traction control, hill-descent control, and more.

No matter how good a proving ground is, however, there is no substitute for being out in the real world on real 4x4 tracks that can vary from easy to extreme. And what better trails are there than those of the Victorian High Country? We were lucky that the High Country was so close – it offers not only a very challenging driving area but also great camping and fabulous scenery.

After we left the steep-sided gorge of the Werribee River at the proving grounds,

we skirted around the edge of Melbourne and took to some good dirt roads around the Yan Yean Reservoir. That took us through to Kinglake and then more blacktop to Mansfield at the base of the High Country.

We dropped tyre pressures once we were on the dirt road at Sheeppark Flat and then crossed the Howqua River at the Flat, without stopping. From here the route climbed steeply to Eight Mile Gap, and we pushed on along a variety of tracks that slowly deteriorated as they passed under and around the sheer rock face of the Bluff on the way to Bluff Hut.

First built in 1956, the hut was ravaged by the 2007 fires but was quickly rebuilt by the Stoney family, which had built the original hut. It's a top spot to stay overnight and to enjoy the views and play of light across the mountains.

The next morning, we

dropped down the relatively steep 16 Mile Jeep Track to come to Pikes Flat on the edge of the Howqua River and then, a little farther upstream, Bindaree Hut, with its extensive flat dotted with huge mountain ash.

A quick climb and then a drive around Circuit Road had us at Speculation Road before we took a break at the long, narrow clearing that surrounds King River Hut. From here, our route took us along more challenging tracks as we climbed up on to the Cobbler Plateau, although the section of track known and revered as 'The Staircase' no longer offers the tough challenge it once did.

After a quick stop at Lake Cobbler (another nice camp spot), we were on our way again, taking the ridgetop run along the Abbeyard Lake Cobbler Track. Again, this has some steep sections, and the views across the ranges are

utterly superb.

At the bottom of that not-so-terrible descent, we turned to follow the Buffalo River downstream on what was a pretty good dirt road. There are some enjoyable camps dotted between the road and the river and we pulled up at one to enjoy the tranquillity and to discuss the merits of each of the contenders.

For the last day, our route took us farther downstream until we crossed the spine of the range on the Goldie Spur Track, which cuts across the southern edge of the great rock massif of Mount Buffalo. Once in the historic Buckland Valley, we amused ourselves on a variety of short, minor four-wheel drive tracks for the benefit of the cameraman and the photographer, before turning north and meeting with the bitumen for the long run home. Our job was complete for another year; well, almost.





## THE CREW

# THE JUDGES

### DEAN MELLOR

A past editor of *4X4 Australia* magazine, Dean has worked on a number of four-wheel drive mags since 1994, when he first started at *Overlander* magazine. While his daily driver these days is a D22 Navara, his love and passion belongs to Land Rover, the first 4WD vehicle he drove back in 1984. His most memorable 4WD trip was across the Simpson Desert's Madigan Line in 2005.

### RON MOON

Moonie drove his first 4WD – a Series 1 Land Rover – in 1966, when he joined the Australian army. He has been driving 4WD vehicles ever since. He cracked his job-of-a-lifetime when he took over the editorship of *4X4 Australia* in 1988, a role he had for nearly 15 years. Now, as *4X4 Au*'s editor-at-large, he wanders the back blocks of Australia and the globe chasing stories.

### DAVE MORLEY

Dave Morley is one of the most respected motoring writers in Australia, and has been a judge on *Wheels* magazine's Car Of The Year for more than 20 years. He drove his first 4WD – an FJ45 – back in the early 1970s when living up in the Snowy Mountains of New South Wales. He has since travelled much of Australia and the world by bike, car and 4WD.

### NORM NEEDHAM

Norm was on the family farm way back in 1958 when he drove his first 4WD – a Series 1 Landie. Establishing Traction 4 (now ARB Artarmon) back when the 4WD industry was small and young, Norm is a Wikipedia of all things Toyota. With trips

all over the country under his belt, his ground-breaking journey to Cape York in 1975 remains the most memorable.

### MATT RAUDONIKIS

Matt is the current Editor of *4X4 Australia* magazine and came to the role in late 2013 after a long stint as the editor of *Overlander* magazine. His first experience with four-wheel drives was back in 1986, when he drove a G60 Patrol. He now owns a BJ73 mid-wheelbase Cruiser. His most memorable 4WD adventure was a 10km, 18-hour-long journey in remote, icy Iceland.

### JOHN ROTH

'Roothy' is arguably the best-known four-wheel driver in Australia, having started behind the wheel of a WWII Jeep on his family sheep property in the northern Flinders Ranges back in 1964. Now a regular to these hallowed pages, Roothy's *Low Range* television show keeps him travelling, while his three 1983 40 Series Cruisers, a 76 Cruiser, a 42 Jeep, a Suzi Sierra and an ex-army Series 2A Landie keep him busy when he's at home.

### SIMON VELLA

Simon has 23 years' experience at Tough Dog and is now head of research and development at the suspension specialist – when he talks about suspension, you'd better listen, as there will always be something to learn. His first four-wheel drive experience was on the fabled beaches of Newcastle back in the early 1990s and his most memorable trip was a testing and product-proving jaunt to the deserts of Botswana in 2015.





4X4OTY 2015 WINNER

# FORD EVEREST TREND

New or updated, the vehicles of 4X4OTY ran a close race. In the end, the all-new Everest rose above the pack to summit the highest peak.

**W**hile it was exciting for us to have a bunch of new – not just updated – cars to test in 2015, there could only be one winner. As the week wore on and we sat down around the campfire each night to reflect, it became obvious that the Everest was winning favour with the judges. All the comments about it were positive, but so too were many comments about the other cars on test.

Interestingly, the only updated car in the group, the Toyota Prado, was also hard to fault and no-one had a bad thing to say about it. In reality, there were no duds in the group and every one of them was in the running for the top award.

Regardless of how much judges might say they like a car – or not – during a week, that isn't how the winner is determined.

Each of the judges, seven of them this year, scored each of the vehicles according to five 4X4OTY criteria, to give each car a score out of 50. It's black and white – if the judges are fair dinkum, what they like or don't like shouldn't come into the equation. What works, and what doesn't work, is what matters.

When the judges' scores are compiled, we add them up to find the winner.

The Everest scored 259 points out of a possible 350, the Prado was close behind with 250 points, and the

Hilux scored 244 points in total. Five of our seven judges scored the Everest highest, while the Hilux and Prado had their respective fans.


Even though we had a bumper crop of new 4x4s, it was disappointing to find that very few of them raised the bar – by introducing new technology to the segment or taking the lead away from established class favourites – in their selected category.

None of the new utes have had full-time 4x4 or the latest electronic safety systems introduced to their ranges. In some cases, these technologies are available in other markets around the world, but the manufacturers have chosen not to give them

to Australian drivers.

The technology and features in the Everest might not be all new, but the new model has brought these features down to a more affordable price point so that more Australian families can drive in safer, more capable 4x4 cars.

Ford has done a stellar job to refine the Ranger's powertrain to suit the Everest and put it in a wagon body that stands up to the best in the class. The Everest has given buyers another alternative in the 4x4 wagon market and it's one that is worthy of their consideration.

It is a car that the engineers of Ford Australia can be proud of. 





## TOTAL SCORES



EVEREST TOTAL **259**



FORTUNER TOTAL **227**



HILUX TOTAL **244**



NAVARA TOTAL **221**



PRADO TOTAL **250**



TRITON TOTAL **227**

As the week wore on and we sat down around the campfire each night to reflect, it became obvious that the Everest was winning favour with the judges





**TOUGH AS  
GUTS**

In addition to improved handling and on-road comfort, the Tough Dog Hilux rides 40mm higher.







TOUGH DOG 4WD SUSPENSION

# RIDING SMOOTH

Tough Dog brought its new Hilux along to the party to show how much of an improvement you can expect with a quality aftermarket suspension kit.

Joining *4X4 Australia* on this year's 4X4OTY test was suspension expert Simon Vella, production manager at renowned four-wheel drive suspension specialist 4Way Suspension Products – the company behind Tough Dog 4WD Suspension.

Simon brought along the new Tough-Dog-equipped Toyota Hilux fitted with the company's 'comfort' suspension kit, comprising of new struts up front with foam cell dampers, and 0-300kg springs in the rear, also mated to foam cell dampers.

This presented the 4X4OTY testing team with the unique opportunity to drive the standard Toyota Hilux back-to-back with Tough Dog's example, in some of the most

demanding terrain in the country, both at Melbourne 4x4 Training and Proving Ground and in the spectacular Victorian High Country.

Simon reckons the new Hilux is one of the best of the new breed of 4x4 utes when it comes to carrying a heavy load, but he agrees with the rest of the 4X4OTY testing team that unladen ride quality leaves a lot to be desired. And after a week of back-to-back driving, we all agreed that Tough Dog has made significant improvements to both the Hilux's ride and handling and, as a result, vehicle stability both on and off the road.

In addition, the Tough Dog kit gives the new Hilux a ground clearance gain of 40mm, front and rear, which

proved very beneficial over rocky and undulating terrain.

The Tough Dog team started developing the suspension kit for the Hilux well before the vehicle landed in Australia, travelling to Thailand to source a strut/coil combo that could be brought back to Sydney for closer examination. What they found was that the strut is very similar to that used in the previous-model Hilux.

"The spring seat is the same as the previous model, the length of the strut is the same, the helix of the coil is the same," Simon explains. "So development of the new front-end for Hilux was just a matter of graphing the shock absorber on the dyno ... but not taking it for granted, because sometimes when the Aussie

model comes here the valving in the shock is different."

As soon Tough Dog could get their hands on an Aussie-spec Hilux (the vehicle you see here), they re-examined the front-end and started work on the rear.

"We rated the leaf spring to see how much rate it generates, we graphed the shock absorber right through its entire cycle, then we then put a load in the back to see how far it compressed," Simon says. "We then simulated that spring on a machine so that we could accurately measure the rate that it generates at ride height."

"Then we went back and took our three different assortments of loads – being 300kg, 500kg, and up to the GVM of the vehicle – and we



Whether you rarely carry a load, always have something in the back, or use your Hilux to haul everything including the kitchen sink, Tough Dog will have a kit to suit

## SHOCK, HORROR

Tough Dog suspension kit for the Hilux will hit shelves in 2016. What better way to start the new year!

put that on the standard spring to see how it coped. We also rated the vehicle for comfort and vibrations, and that's done through seat-of-the-pants testing; it's all well and good to get a graph of the shock absorber and get a spring rate, but what does that actually mean in the vehicle when you're driving it?"

Armed with the spring rate information, the shock dyno graphs, and the seat-of-the-pants testing feedback, Tough Dog then makes the first set of coils and the first struts. It then also makes up the first leaf springs. "We'll make up our comfort spring first [0-300kg, as fitted to the Tough Dog Hilux on 4X4OTY], which will generally be a composition of an 8mm main with a couple of 7mm leaves, which is typical of a dual-cab ute, and then we'll

make a shock absorber, put that in the vehicle and drive it to see how it feels, to see if the shock absorber is controlling the spring..."

Simon points out that Tough Dog's nine-stage externally adjustable shock absorber is a great tool in developing new shocks for new-model vehicles. "With the nine-stage adjustable shock, there is in fact 800 per cent of adjustability from setting zero to nine, so in that 800 per cent of adjustability, we would start on, say, setting two front and rear, and then we'd go for a drive," Simon explains. "So this Hilux here has already had a set of nine-stage adjustable shocks in it; so we got the valving right where we wanted it and then we built the sealed units."

Despite the Tough Dog

Hilux suspension kit not yet being signed-off when driven on 4X4OTY, we reckon it's just about spot on. "All of the feedback from the [4X4OTY testing team] over the last couple of days suggests that the kit feels pretty good," Simon says. "There might be a little bit more tuning left in it, but I'm happy with the way it's riding."

Simon advises that the Tough Dog suspension kit for the new Hilux will be on dealer shelves by the end of January.

Whether you rarely carry a load, always have something in the back, or use your Hilux to haul everything including the kitchen sink, Tough Dog will have a kit to suit.

Check out the easy-to-use suspension kit builder on the Tough Dog website at: [www.toughdog.com.au](http://www.toughdog.com.au). 



# THE REST OF THE FIELD



Improved on-  
and off-road  
stability.



## TOYOTA FORTUNER:

With essentially the same front-end as the Hilux, Tough Dog says it should have a ready-to-roll suspension kit available to suit the Toyota Fortuner by the end of January.

of 30-35mm. There are three front-end options (depending on accessories fitted) and three rear-end options (depending on load carried). On test, we found the standard Navara springs to be too soft in off-road conditions, and we're certain the vehicle would benefit greatly from the fitment of a Tough Dog suspension kit.



## FORD EVEREST:

Tough Dog is yet to develop a suspension kit for the new Ford Everest, but development time is likely to be short. The front-end of the Everest is essentially the same as the Ford Ranger's, and coil-spring kits take significantly less time to develop than leaf spring kits.



## TOYOTA PRADO:

Tough Dog already has a variety of suspension kits to suit the Toyota Prado. As with all of its wagon kits, Tough Dog has suspension set-ups for vehicles with no added accessories, vehicles with steel or aluminium bars and vehicles with a bar and winch fitted. There are also three rear-end options: 0-300kg, 300-500kg and constant 500kg.



## MITSUBISHI TRITON:

Tough Dog is currently working on its suspension kit to suit the MQ Triton and expects to have a product available soon. So far the company has found that the standard spring rates are too firm, so you can expect a big improvement to ride quality when the Tough Dog kit becomes available.



## NISSAN NAVARA:

The Tough Dog kit for the new Nissan Navara offers a lift.



# V8 LandCruiser need a 6th gear?



Marks4WD electronic Overdrive gives you that extra gear you've been looking for.

The innovative Overdrive is the ideal accessory for highway cruising and towing. By reducing engine RPM the Overdrive improves fuel consumption and significantly reduces cabin noise. With a 22% reduction in RPM the overdrive has improved gear ratios, especially when towing. Fourth gear with the Overdrive engaged provides the ideal towing ratio – approximately 2,150 rpm @ 100km/h.



## Gear Ratios

	Standard		Overdrive	
3rd	1:49:1	4,200 @ 100km/h	1.16:1	3,275rpm @ 100km/h
4th	1:1	2,760rpm @ 100km/h	0.78:1	2,150rpm @ 100km/h
5th	0.88:1	2,430 @ 100km/h	0.68:1	1,890rpm @ 100km/h

\*These figures are based on a standard vehicle running 265/70/16 tyres

**OVERDRIVE**  
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V D J 7 9 L A

# G O L I





N D C R U I S E R

# ation

WORDS DANIEL EVERETT PHOTOS NATHAN DUFF

It's not every day you find a Land Cruiser that leaves you speechless. But this isn't your everyday Land Cruiser.







Engine mods are subtle in comparison.



Any Super Tourer has to have spares!



## The Cruiser had a grand total of zero kilometres on the clock before Norm dropped it off to the guys at Patriot Campers

In this line of work we come across a lot of four-wheel drives. We drive them, look at them, and draw pictures of them in our notepads while we're in meetings. You get the point – they're a large part of our lives. So you can imagine it's a bit of an oddity when something comes along that absolutely floors us. Norm's 79 is that something.

Now we've all seen 79 Series Cruisers before; they're everywhere. And why shouldn't they be? They're good; bloody good. So good, in fact, that Norm figured the best course of action in life was to ditch his wildly modified turbo-diesel TD42 Patrol and slot his backside into the uncompromisingly tough dual-cab 70 Series to start all over again.

Now you can't exactly order a 79 Series like this – you have to build it – and Norm didn't hold back when it came to building it. The Cruiser had a grand total of zero kilometres on the clock before Norm dropped it off to the guys at Patriot campers, ready to cut it in half with a grinder.

For now, though, we'll take the story back to the dealership, because that's where this story really starts. Norm has a young family and, like other young families, his family enjoys doing things like kayaking, and riding quad bikes and dirt bikes. They also enjoy doing these things for a month at a time in exotic places like Lorella Springs and less exotic places like Tasmania.



Front camera feeds the in-dash display.



35-inch Mickey Thompsons fill out the guards.





Lift-off camper set-up from Jackoff Campers caters for the family getaway.

Roof-mounted boat loader keeps Norm's tinny locked down.







It was this that motivated him to build what he described as “the ultimate Super Tourer”.

So there was Norm at the dealership, signing the dotted line for a brand-spanking-new 79 Series Cruiser. While most of us would be trying to get it down the first dirt road we could point the road-terrain tyres at, Norm was calculating. Before he had even taken delivery of his new adventure machine, he had the guys in the service department install a Gross Vehicle Mass (GVM) upgrade from EFS suspension. By having it installed before he took delivery, it became a dealer-fitted option and, thus, would be legally engineered for every state in Australia – yes, even you, Tasmania. The upgrade allowed Norm to load an extra 700kg on the Cruiser without running afoul of the law.

With the GVM upgrade parking the 79 a good three inches closer to the sky, Norm took it straight to the guys at Patriot Campers for one of their ‘Super Tourer’ builds. For those of you currently living under a rock, they’re the guys responsible for some of the most pants-tightening 4x4s, campers and trailers in the country.

The base model Super Tourer tray runs in at a comparatively modest \$15,990. But Norm didn’t want comparatively modest; he wanted a 4x4 that’d do everything he’d ever ask of it, take him everywhere he’d ever want to go, and do it without ever complaining. So he ticked a few boxes in the ‘optional extras’ column. Options included a 300mm chassis extension for better weight distribution and a bigger tray, as well as a built-in water tank to go with the standard pull-out kitchenette and rear drawer set-up. See what we mean by pants-tighteningly cool?

Norm didn’t order up the bigger tray because he was planning on carrying a smart car with him everywhere he went. It was given the nod so he’d have room for a massive lift-off camper tray from the guys at the ambiguously named Jackoff Campers. The lift-off camper gives Norm a versatile set-up that can function as a job-site work truck, and a family vehicle with a month’s load of camping gear on board.

Tucked inside the canopy you’ll find twin 12V fridges: a 100L Engel and 35L Waeco, both strapped in tight to two MSA4x4 drop-down fridge slides. The pair is powered by a Redarc battery management system, which keeps the tray- and camper-mounted lithium batteries charged up so the standard battery under the bonnet can worry about doing standard stuff.

There’s also a 15hp Yamaha outboard engine attached to another slide in the camper – we assume this isn’t powered by lithium, but we’re not really boat people, so don’t quote us. What you can quote us on, though, is that Norm would need a boat to go with the outboard motor. A tinny fits the bill, and when it’s not attached to the previously mentioned

**Norm didn’t want comparatively modest; he wanted a 4x4 that’d do everything he’d ever ask of it, take him everywhere he’d ever want to go, and do it without ever complaining**





CUSTOM VD J79 LAND CRUISER



engine, it's strapped down on top to the roof-mounted boat loader. That's handy. The canopy also plays host to the simply designed 12V electrical skeleton system. We say skeleton because Norm's 79 is currently still in the build, so expect a whole heap more gadgetry-like LED light bars and invertors to be installed.

If you've got an eagle eye, you might have spotted a big vacant spot in the bullbar. Part of that electrical wizardry Norm has got on order is a pair of Lightforce's brand-new LED driving lights. Until then, the full suite of TJM bar work will provide more than enough eye candy for you to ogle. Up top, the roof rack is a custom-built unit. It's bare for now, but it'll soon see a roll-out awning bolted to it with a matching Foxwing awning for the canopy.

To those who don't know Norm, it might seem like he's caught up in the hype and throwing every bit of gear he can find at his 79. After speaking to him and hearing firsthand the passion he has for it, I can say that couldn't be further from the truth. While he's had the 79 for near on two years,

## That trailer

**EVERY** bit as impressive as the vehicle towing it is the Patriot TH560 trailer. If we were to rattle off the spec-sheet, it'd read like a high-end 4x4 built in its own right. 500mm ground clearance, fully independent suspension with an airbag and dual shocks on each wheel, an aluminium body, a 120L water tank, a roof-top tent, a 304-grade stainless steel kitchen and 285/75 R16 mud tyres. What the spec-sheet doesn't list is the versatility the trailer allows families like Norm's. With the one trailer they can load up the kayaks, the quad bikes, the dirt bikes, and head off for weeks at a time. The trailer can change to suit their needs as the family's needs change. And that's something you won't ever find on a spec-sheet.







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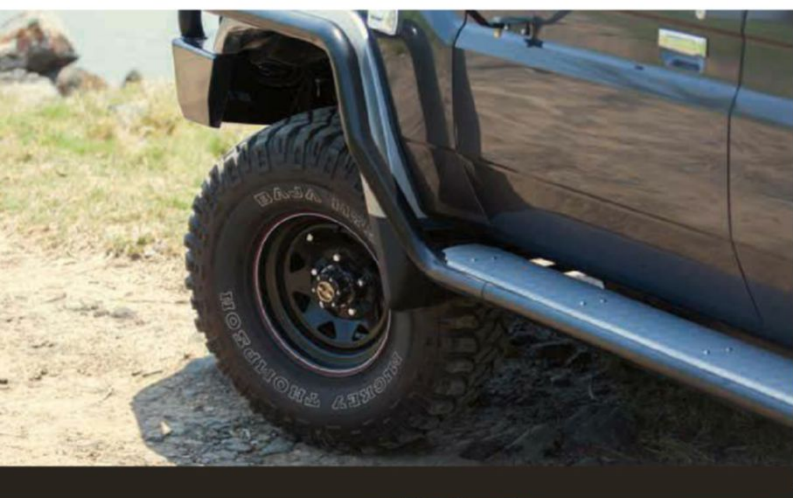
the water. There might be nothing but a 2 metre void. No matter what you're driving, no matter how passable it looks, the only way to stay 100% in control is to forget about trying to drive through. So stay safe and start preparing your Plan B at [www.qld.gov.au/floodwatersafety](http://www.qld.gov.au/floodwatersafety)



[www.qld.gov.au/floodwatersafety](http://www.qld.gov.au/floodwatersafety)







it has only racked up a little over 6000km. It's spent most of its life in shops getting work done, and getting it done right. See Norm is not the kind of bloke to rush in half-cocked, throw an eBay light bar on the roof and have it burn his pride and joy to the ground on the very next trip. Every modification is carefully planned and executed with an attention to detail that'd make the Mars Rover look like a downhill billy cart piloted by your drunk uncle. In fact, it's so well built, and so carefully planned, Justin Montesalvo from Patriot Campers described it as "the best camper/tourer set-up I have ever seen (besides mine of course)". While that sounds like something only a race across Australia can adequately settle, it's telling of the quality of this build.

That attention to detail has found its way under the bonnet, too. While you won't find three extra turbochargers punching out a gazillion extra horsepower, you will find subtle upgrades like an oil catch can, fuel filtration system, a three-inch exhaust and a Roo Systems chip that improve reliability and usability. Even the rear track has been corrected to keep all the wheels in line (a problem with the 79 is the rear wheel track is narrower than the front wheel track). The wider stance helps the steel wheels and 35-inch Mickey Thompson MTZs fill out the guards.

While the interior does have the oh-so-desirable double factory diff-lock switch, it's also copped a heap of understated, yet important upgrades. There's the standard UHF and overhead console, but there's also trick gear like front and rear cameras feeding into the in-dash Polaris DVD player, and a pair of fold-down seat back tables to give the kids in the back seats room for activities.

Would we say it's the best tourer in Australia? No – but only because we don't want Justin Montesalvo coming after us. 🚙



**Every mod is carefully planned and executed with an attention to detail that'd make the Mars Rover look like a downhill billy cart piloted hilariously by your drunk uncle**





# FORGET HOW PASSABLE IT LOOKS



Looks can be deceiving. It's especially true with floodwater. Even if it looks relatively calm, even if you know every bend, dip and pothole in your round trip, floodwater never behaves how you think it will. Maybe the road underneath has collapsed, or a surge is coming out of the blue. Maybe that shallow water is flowing just fast enough to catch

your tyres at the wrong angle. You just can't tell, which means you don't have control, the water does. No matter what you're driving, no matter how passable it looks, the only way to stay 100% in control is to forget about trying to drive through. So stay safe and start preparing your Plan B at [www.qld.gov.au/floodwatersafety](http://www.qld.gov.au/floodwatersafety)



[www.qld.gov.au/floodwatersafety](http://www.qld.gov.au/floodwatersafety)









# RedHeat

MAZDA  
BT-50

WORDS MARCUS CRAFT PHOTOS THOMAS WIELECKI



When you're chasing adventure in outback South Australia, you have to take the good with the bad. If you can do this, you're guaranteed a great adventure.





There are two aspects frequently glossed over in tales of grand outback adventures, and yet they are constant in the red-hot heart of Australia: flies and heat. On almost any outback adventure, the air will be abuzz with countless winged bastards drinking the moisture of your skin, hair, mouth and, most annoyingly, eyes while the dry heat bakes your skin and saps your spirit. But that's part of the fun. The combination of the two is nature's way of sorting the human wheat from the chaff; those not hardy enough to cop the discomfort suffer in the conditions and swiftly fade.

The outback and the desert are welcome challenges. Endure them and you enjoy them.

### THE OPAL CAPITAL

Coober Pedy is a stunning town; a quirky mishmash of indigenous and migrant culture, sprinkled with the trappings of modern-day life, including fast food, satellite television and brand-new dual-cab utes. All of this is set in – what from above looks like – a barren landscape peppered with potholes. Those potholes are signs of opal exploration, which has at times been the region's lifeblood.

We landed on the small airstrip at Coober Pedy, threw our gear in 4X4 Australia's new long-term Mazda BT-50 dual-cab XTR – bush-ready with bullbar and snorkel – and set off.



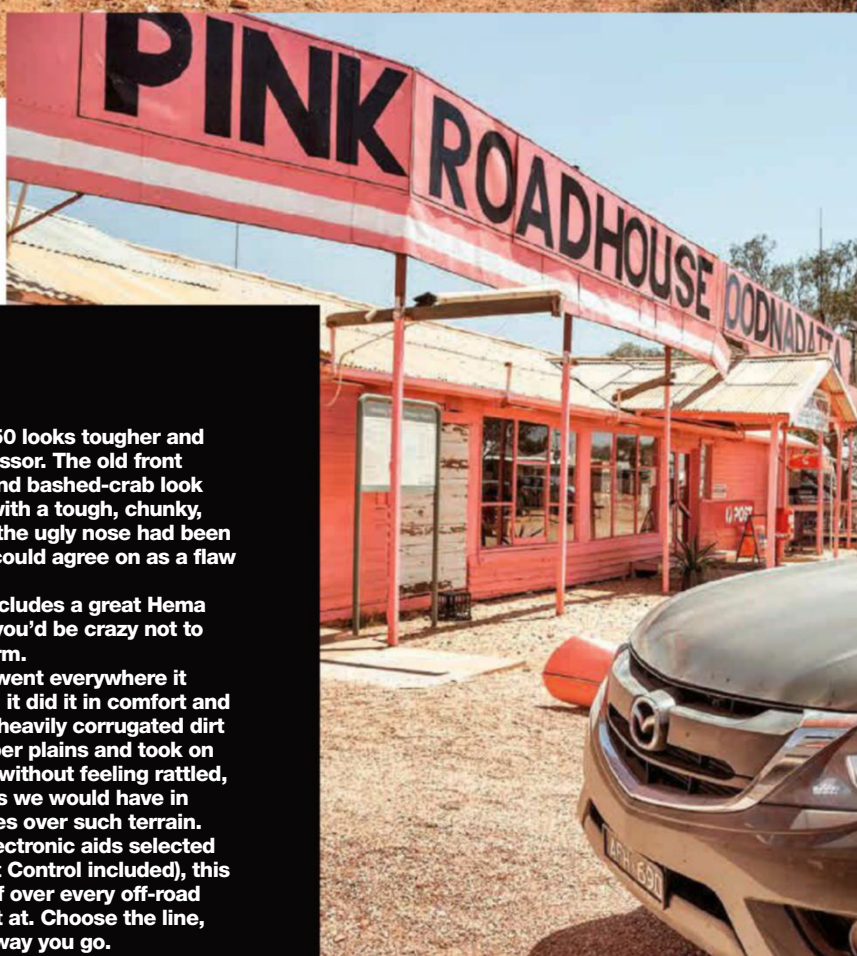


It's no wonder our BT-50 arrived back in Melbourne full of bulldust and gibbers after Crafty had his fun with it in the desert.





Oodnadatta's Pink Roadhouse is a must-stop on any outback trek. The Oodna-burgers aren't bad either!



## THE BT-50

MAZDA'S updated BT-50 looks tougher and better than its predecessor. The old front end's upswept 'eyes' and bashed-crab look have gone – replaced with a tough, chunky, squared-off presence (the ugly nose had been the only thing anyone could agree on as a flaw in the previous model).

New optional gear includes a great Hema Maps package, which you'd be crazy not to tick off on the order form.

Off-road, this BT-50 went everywhere it bloody wanted to – and it did it in comfort and style. We drove it over heavily corrugated dirt tracks, flirted with gibber plains and took on super-heated sand; all without feeling rattled, jolted or out of sorts; as we would have in some older unladen utes over such terrain.

With four-low and electronic aids selected (rock-solid Hill Descent Control included), this ute virtually drove itself over every off-road challenge we pointed it at. Choose the line, choose the gear and away you go.

The 3.2-litre five cylinder – producing an outback-ready 147kW at 3000rpm and 470Nm at 1750-2500rpm – is nicely mated to the six-speed auto, producing plenty of real-world power and low grunt when it matters.

It's no disappointment on gravel or bitumen, offering a car-like ride that's stable, predictable and comfortable. We also drove along sandy creek beds and up and down deeply rutted washouts without a problem.

We drove it up a rocky hillside as high as we could until the severity of the slope screamed at us to stop – or was it the Mazda crew?







The search for opals here, about 846km from Adelaide, has been going on for more than a century; the first opal claim was pegged in February 1915. Living conditions above ground are so harsh that many years ago, some people started building their homes below ground, where the temperature is reportedly a constant 21°C – so you really can't blame them.

We weren't here to discover precious gemstones; we were here to tackle some of the toughest outback driving in Australia. Our convoy, heading north for Oodnadatta, had only hit about 9km on the trip meter when the bitumen ended and the fun – and gravel – started.

South Australia's bewitching outback stretched away from us in all directions, beckoning us.

## OODNADATTA

It's a mixed-up world out here, a captivating blend of gibber plains and sand hills; sometimes a moonscape; sometimes a stark blue sky over rocky outcrops. It hasn't rained here in six years. Our route led through cattle stations north of Coober Pedy, including the imposing Mt Barry Station, which begins about 100km north of the dusty town.

Suffice to say, this is no country for city-slicker utes. If a vehicle doesn't have what it takes to help its user survive out here, then it's found out pretty quickly. Looks don't count out here; ability and reliability do.

Journeys between towns are adventures unto themselves

– through washouts and over corrugations in hard showers of scattered rocks. You could tackle these trips in a two-wheel drive, sure, but a four-wheel drive offers much more in the way of comfort, sure-footedness and dependability.

Our BT-50 had no problems. Most of the major tracks we drove during this bush jaunt were in pretty good nick and the section we did of the 620km-long Oodnadatta Track, stretching between Marree and Marla, was no different. But venture off-road and it takes judicious driving to avoid punctures.

After 230km, we entered Oodnadatta, the "hottest and driest" town in Australia, and pulled in to the legendary Pink Roadhouse – where it's just \$2 per litre of diesel – and tucked in to some burgers.

Later, a police officer borrowed our BT-50 to do some low-speed doughnuts around a dusty claypan. We watched on, sipping water and eating Jelly Babies below the scorching midday sun and a huge stagnant cloud of dust.

The '6x4 trail' the South Australian cop was doing gentle circle-work on was located just outside of Oodnadatta. The bloke was having a ball.

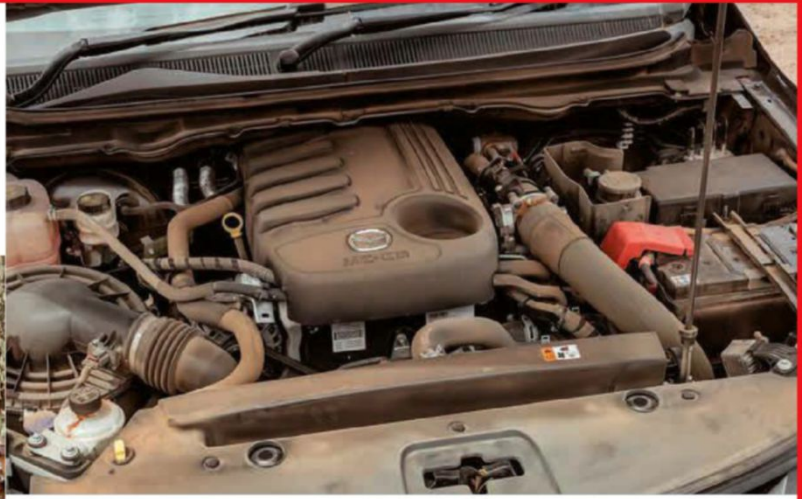
Only minutes earlier, we had seen the police Land Cruiser approaching our position from a kilometre away, gliding across a rich-red, sandy track. We had seen this because we had been stuck – the door-sill was deep in sand, atop a dune. Bugged.

Don't get me wrong: the BT-50 can go almost anywhere. It took two experienced but easily distracted journo's to prevent





Mazda's 3.2-litre five-cylinder diesel engine (right) eats up outback kays with a relaxed gait smaller engines can only dream about.



it conquering this particular obstacle. We'd made a clumsy error: we'd relied on speed to tackle a small but steep-ish dune and had come unstuck at a mound of deep sand just before the dune's crest. Corrugations in the sand at the top – caused by drivers, such as us, with over-inflated tyres – had forced us into a terminal bounce, which had then drained all of our momentum. The more we tried to gun out of it, the deeper the wheels dug. We were going nowhere under our own steam.

We deserved the strife; we'd been running our tyres at 30psi, which, by my reckoning, was almost twice as much air as we should have had in them. With temperatures tickling the upper 40s at that stage, our tyres would have been nudging 35psi or more. The Mazda support crew swung into action, dropped our tyre pressures and snatch-strapped us out in no time.

We headed for our overnight accommodation at Arckaringa Station, about 90km south-west of Oodnadatta and 150km north of Coober Pedy, stopping at a lookout to

Journeys between towns are adventures unto themselves – through washouts and over corrugations in hard showers of scattered rocks





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## **STAGE III**

### **ECU + Exhaust + Turbo + Intercooler**

For those chasing serious power, the Stage 3 kit is the ultimate power upgrade. It includes a full ECU Flash Remap, Premium Exhaust, Intercooler and larger Turbo.







During the day, the sky is crisp and clear blue; the night sky is a black blanket, peppered and aflame with bright, twinkling stars

marvel at the majestic wonder of the Painted Desert, an ancient inland sea bed so named because of the brightly coloured orange, yellow and white shale on the hills.

Standing there, soaking up the atmosphere, the Painted Desert looked unreal, like a massive painting perched in front of us, close enough to touch. Photographers and videographers in our party were working overtime, making the most of the stunning backdrop this amazing natural attraction provided (visit [www.thepainteddesert.com.au](http://www.thepainteddesert.com.au)).

After ditching our gear in our tents, we accepted an invitation from Arckaringa's owner Paul to test out the BT-50s on an improvised 4WD course along twisting, sandy tracks, through dry riverbeds and up and down washed-out and rocky creek banks.

The BT-50s looked the goods and proved their mettle, but Paul still refused to commit when we asked him if he was going to ditch his Toyota for a Mazda.

### ARCKARINGA STATION

That night, we slept under billions of stars at Arckaringa. The station covers 2745km<sup>2</sup> and is rated by the South Australian Pastoral Board to run up to 2100 head of cattle. It has on-site



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cabins and camping and it's a bloody top joint.

The next morning, as we drove out of the station in convoy, a wedge-tailed eagle wheeled about in the sky high above us.

On the return trip to Coober Pedy, we pulled off to the side of the track to tackle a bit of rock-crawling. We didn't want the adventure to end. It was low-range fun on the steep climbs and hill-descent-control heaven on the descents.

There's a raw delight to driving in the outback. Nothing like it. The scenery is incredible and ever-changing, as is the terrain, and

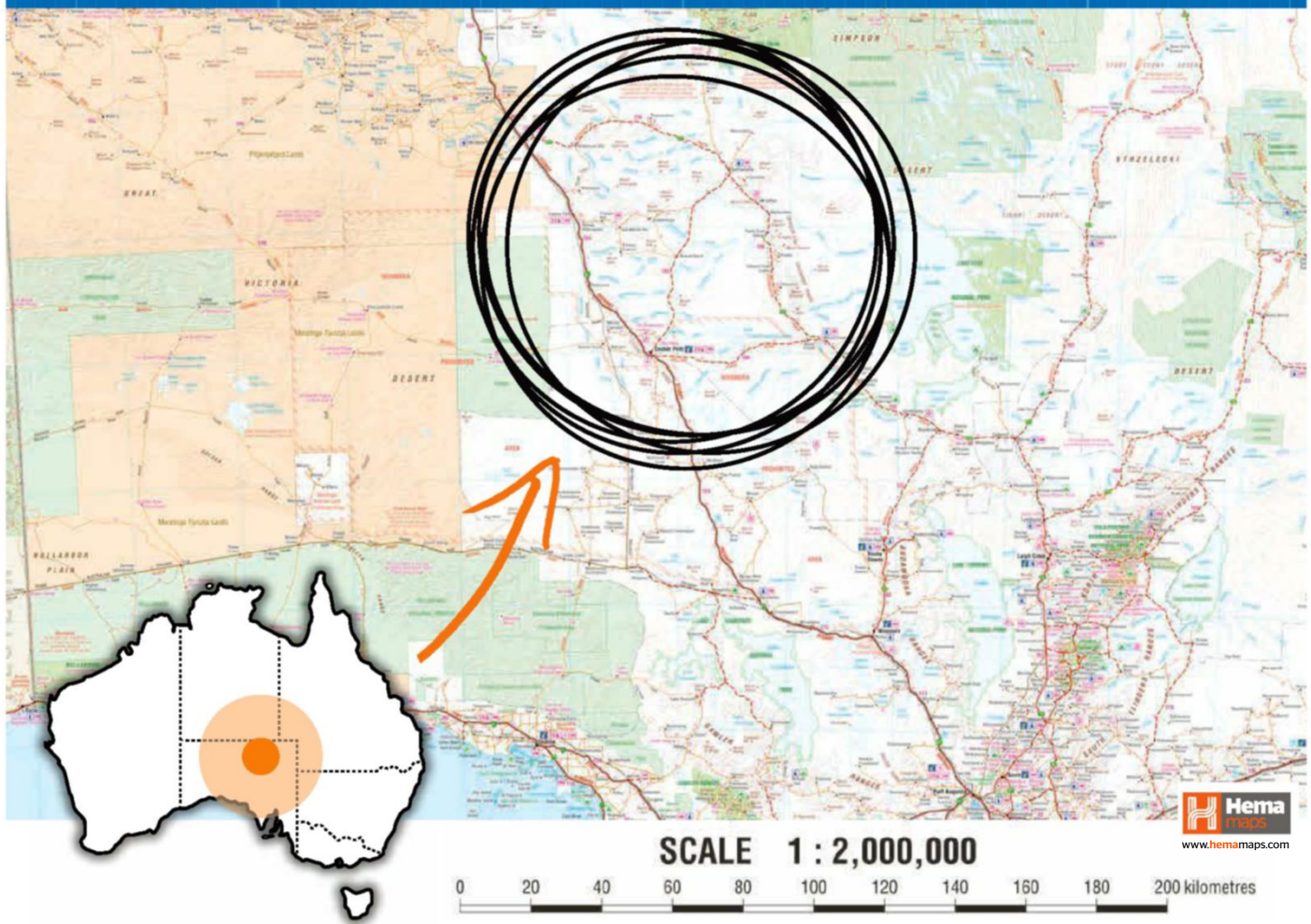
the light is eye-scaldingly bright. During the day, the sky is crisp and clear blue; the night sky is a black blanket, peppered and aflame with bright, twinkling stars.

After more than 500km of outback adventure, every bloke in the BT-50-touring crew had a big-sky smile.

We've been out here loads of times, but that doesn't matter in the grand scheme of things, because the landscape and light, the blue-sky brightness and the sun-bleached sand, the people and the places never fail to surprise. Never mind the flies and heat. 🚗



## OUTBACK SOUTH AUSTRALIA





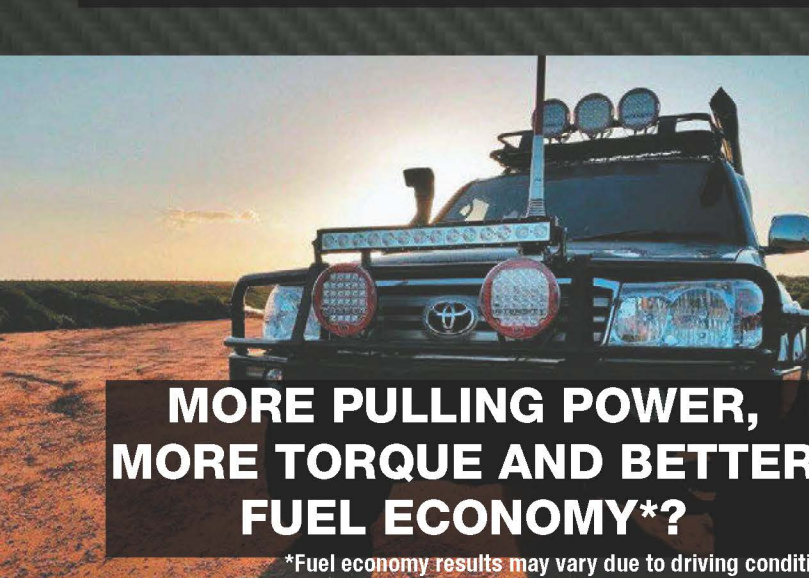


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# Jol's Track

WORDS ALLAN WHITING PHOTOS ALLAN WHITING AND KERYN WILLIAMS

Outback legend Jol Fleming has opened up a new track connecting the northern Simpson Desert's Hay River Track with the western Queensland town of Bedourie. Allan Whiting travelled on the inaugural track-marking mission.







1: The start point at Lake Caroline; 2: Setting up camp at Batton Hill; 3: Allan with his better half, Kez; 4: The national trust-listed Carcory Ruins; 5: The journey from Ethabuka to Bedourie.







3



4



5

**W**hen it comes to bush adventure, there's nothing quite like driving over untravelled country – not to 'bush bash' it, but to open up alternative routes for people who've already driven Australia's major tracks.

The Hay River Track was once a set of tyre tracks running north from Poeppel Corner on the main Simpson Desert crossing to Jervois on the Plenty Highway. This track was blazed by Aboriginal elder, the late Lindsay Bookie, and Jol Fleming, and is now a popular trip with bush adventurers, and a source of income, via permits and camping fees, for the Aboriginal people at the Bookie Family's property, Batton Hill.

This new track, which I think should be called Jol's Track, will also contribute to the Bookie Family funds, because visitors will drive via the Hay River Track and Batton Hill to access it.

At this early stage of development the track is permit-only, sourced from Jol Fleming's Direct 4WD Awareness business in Alice Springs. The permit covers transit through Aboriginal Lands and also includes through-travel access to the Bush Heritage-owned property of Ethabuka, located north-west of Bedourie.

Bush Heritage is an organisation dedicated to protecting the natural environment, by acquiring and preserving properties that have high conservation value or environmental significance. Ethabuka is a haven for desert wildlife and is home to a



## Diamantina National Park

DIAMANTINA NP covers 5000km<sup>2</sup> of Queensland's channel country. The park encompasses weathered sandstone ranges, floodplains, expanses of Mitchell grass, claypans and sand dunes.

The land, a former grazing property called Diamantina Lakes, was sold to the Queensland Government in 1992. The property is well-sited alongside one of two permanent waterholes created by the 'Diamantina Gates' – two gaps at the junction of the Goyder and Hamilton ranges – that concentrate the Diamantina channels into narrow streams, running between the low limestone hills.

The narrowing is clearly visible from 'Janet's Leap', a vantage spot above the river. It is so named because, at the handing over of the Diamantina Lakes Station, one of the onlookers said: "Janet Holmes à Court might as well jump off the cliff as sell the property to National Parks." She didn't jump and we all can appreciate the results of the transfer.

A visit to the park properly begins at the old homestead, at the Ranger's Headquarters. Hunters Gorge campsite has a deep waterhole and sits on the Diamantina, and the other site at Gum Waterhole is on Whistling Duck Creek.

Shady campsites behind waterfront coolabahs let campers witness a display of birdlife unexpected in such a remote region. Kings of the waterhole are undoubtedly the pelicans that 'sail' up and down the water courses, taking time off to fish and to squabble with one another. Cormorants, ducks and swamphens take their chances, fishing beside the much larger pelicans. The waterhole trees are home to thousands of birds, with the noisiest being corellas and galahs.

1: A1's extended wheel-base LC75 and camper are bush ready;  
2: Setting up for the night among the Gidgee.



wetland system of national significance, brimming with shrimp, fish and waterbirds (following good rains). It also has one of the richest lists of reptile species in Australia, including Australia's largest goanna, the perentie.

At the request of the Bookie Family and the Bush Heritage organisation, the initial trips will be tag-alongs, run by Jol Fleming.

The Hay River to Bedourie Track runs east from the Hay River Track, close to the turnoff to Lake Caroline. The initial tag-along groups will meet up at Jervois, allowing access on the Plenty Highway via Alice Springs or Boulia. They'll then head south-east, on the northern section of the Hay River Track, to Batton Hill. Camping there is excellent, with flushing loos, donkey-fired hot showers, fire pits and even a wood-fired oven. From there, the convoy will head south and cross the Hay River's sandy watercourse, before visiting the dry bed of Lake Caroline to camp the night on a firm claypan.

The starting point of Jol's Track is on the eastern side of the Hay River, where the new adventure begins. As with the Madigan Line, there has been no official track construction, so drivers will follow our 2015 tyre tracks through low scrub and over spinifex humps. Another



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Shade cloth is used to keep the spinifex seeds out of the radiator.

similarity with the Madigan Line is that the dunes have much steeper eastern faces than their western sides.

The track traverses vegetated dunes and swales that gradually increase in size as the track nears the Queensland border. The permit conditions specify no deviations from the track and no deviations from graded private property tracks, other than campsite access. On the inaugural trip, we found great Gidgee campsites close to our tyre tracks so there was no need to stray.

There are no significant landmarks on this trip, but the enjoyment comes from travelling through desert country that has probably never been traversed by anyone. Driving through such country is tough on vehicle suspensions, because much of the route is through spinifex country. Negotiating grass mounds is a lumpy business that uses full suspension travel. One of our vehicles had a spring breakage and a cracked bracket that required some bush-welding attention.

Key GPS points along the route are the

## Bedourie

BEDOURIE, meaning 'dust storm', is a small town with a population of 120 people and is situated between Birdsville and Boulia. There's an artistic representation of a dust storm in Herbert Street.

Set on a sand ridge and surrounded by Eyre Creek, Bedourie is the administrative centre of the Diamantina Shire's 95,000km<sup>2</sup>.

In the 1880s, Bedourie was a major watering and rest stop for drovers moving cattle from the Northern Territory and north-west Queensland to the customs collection point in Birdsville, 200km south.

The town has an airport, hotel/motel, caravan park, hot spring baths, a restaurant and tavern, general store, wireless internet, fuel services, a police station and a medical clinic.

Attractions around Bedourie include the Vaughan Johnson Lookout, the wetland at Cuttaburra Crossing, Carcory Ruins and Diamantina National Park.

Cuttaburra Crossing, a permanent waterhole and wetland on Eyre Creek, is located between Lake Koolivoo and Lake Machattie and is home to many species of birds. This birdlife can be viewed from a roadside rest and viewing area.

This track is remote and there are no water sources or services between Jervois on the Plenty Highway and Bedourie

The endless red dust of the Hay River Track.



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Bush welding  
with Shane in  
the outback.

national park marker post at the Northern Territory-Queensland border and the east-west fence line on Ethabuka Station.

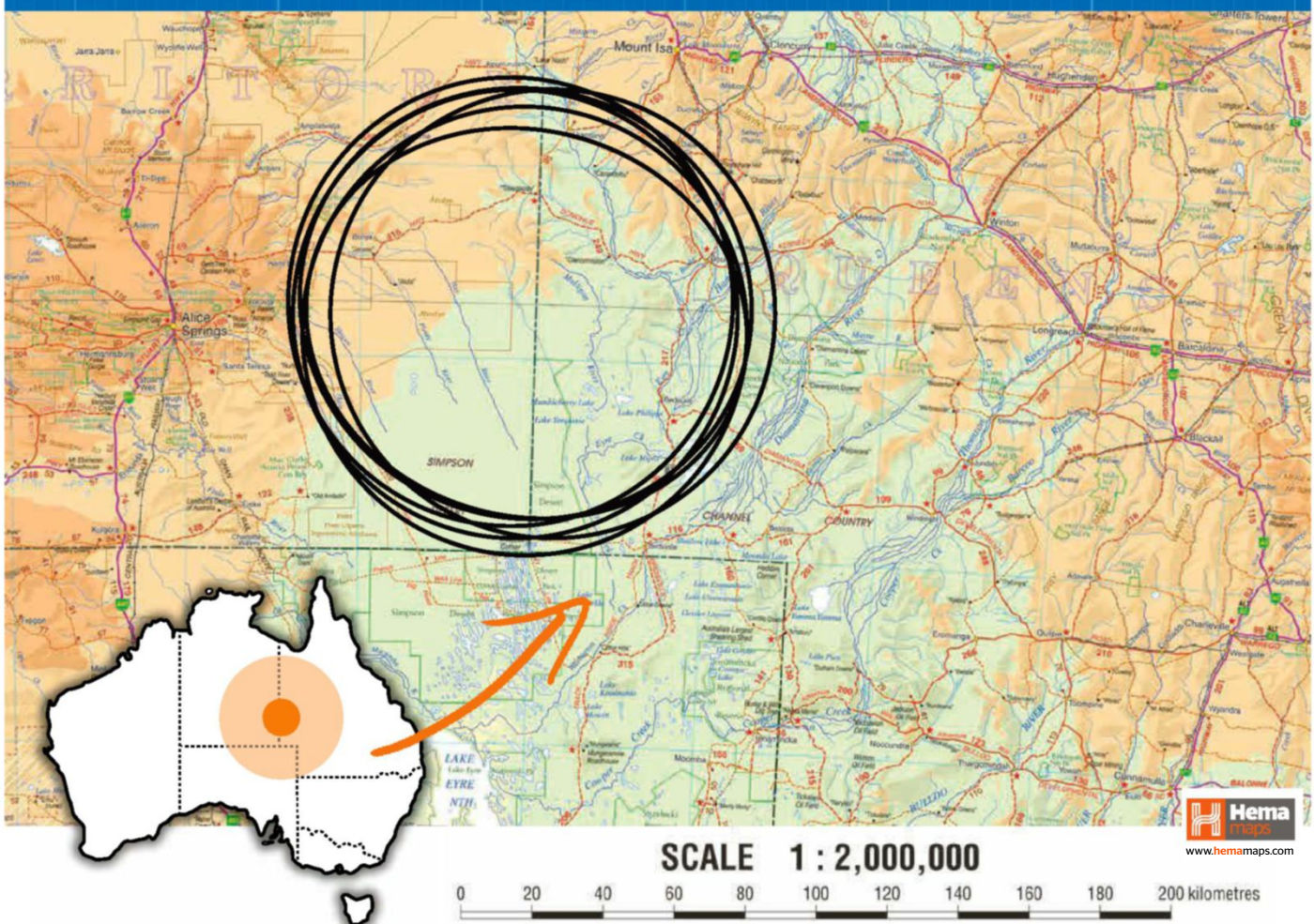
The dunes on Ethabuka are high, but progress is eased by the fact that these fence line tracks are graded regularly.

Needless to say, this track is remote and there are no water sources or services between Jervois on the Plenty Highway and Bedourie.

Most diesel four-wheel drives should manage the Jervois-Bedourie trek on one and a half tanks of fuel, but extra capacity is wise. Petrol vehicles use much more fuel in sandy conditions, so double tank capacity is essential.

Jervois sells fuel and is also your last chance for an ice-cream until Bedourie some five to six days later. For more information on Jol's Track or to book your permits, go to [www.direct4wd.com.au](http://www.direct4wd.com.au) or call Jol Fleming on (08) 8952 3359 📞

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# Snake Patrol

These two Nissan Patrols aren't yellow when it comes to heading bush with a belly full of snakes.







S

ome people are scared out of their brains at the site of any snake – venomous or not.

Some people shy away from snakes. Clever folk leave them alone. Not-so-clever folk pick up a shovel and attempt to whack them, figuring, ‘the only good snake is a dead one’.

That’s exactly why Tony Harrison – from Gold Coast-based business Reptile Relocation and Awareness – started helping neighbours catch and remove snakes and other reptiles from backyards, roof cavities and inside homes. Tony figured saving these few snakes was the right thing to do, given his love of all things reptilian.

Fast forward some 20 years and those initial ‘good deeds’ have turned into a full-time job that keeps Tony and his fairer half, Brooke, busy catching and relocating reptiles. They even take reptile awareness bookings for shows at schools, chains of hardware stores and kids’ parties.

Tony has been playing with reptiles since his junior years but, not one to do things half-heartedly, he is now fully qualified for his slithery relocation profession (he has a Damage Mitigation


Permit) and is even certified to keep crocs up to a certain length.

Getting back to those junior years, Tony’s family backyard swimming pool was quite different from most pools. For a start, there was no water in it. Rather, it was filled with sand, dirt, logs and grass, and was used as a gigantic cage for keeping unusual pets including blue-tongue lizards, bearded dragons and frill-necked lizards, which would regularly get taken to school for ‘show and tell’.

These days, Tony is also in high demand supplying reptiles to movie directors and stars (who want reptiles featured in their flicks), advertising agents, models and other organisations that want to include something with scales in their promotional photos and videos.

He recently spent time with Rebecca Gibney on the Queensland set of the new mini-series *Wanted*, and has been interviewed various times for current affairs and news programs.

Funny moments? Yep. Tony says he has been called out many times to catch snakes that have turned out to be rubber toys. Then there was the time he was called to catch a radiator hose, a rolled-up towel and, wait for it, a long dog poo – oh well, better to be safe than sorry, eh!



Both Patrols have just enough aftermarket gear to get them to the bush locations where captured animals are released





Tony has a permit that allows him to keep crocs. Beats any guard dog.



The rears of both Patrols are set up to transport reptiles to and from the wild.





## TWIN PATROLS

Well, they're not really twin Patrols. Tony's GU is a 3.0-litre diesel; Brooke's GU is a 4.5-litre petrol guzzler. Tony uses his Patrol to catch and release wild animals, while Brooke uses hers for transporting their 'captive' reptiles to and from shows and movie sets. This helps prevent any unwanted diseases from being transmitted from wild animals to captive ones.

Neither Patrol features bucketloads of aftermarket gear, but they have just enough to allow them to get to the bush locations where captured animals are released. They are also equipped for a bit of weekend play in the mud and rocks, and Tony and Brooke recently completed a long-distance work trip through north-west Queensland in Brooke's Patrol – so they do tour quite a bit to transport reptiles around the country.

Tony is happy to admit that Brooke's Patrol is a little more capable than his in the rougher stuff. Hers has ARB air lockers, raised Tough Dog suspension, a Tough Dog adjustable steering stabiliser, a snorkel and an electric winch. But he figures he gets at least one tick in his favour – his has taller 35-inch Mickey Thompson Baja MTZs, while Brooke's has 33-inchers.

Brooke's tougher-looking Patrol also sports a steel ARB



Looks like these Mickey Thompsons have yet another fan.

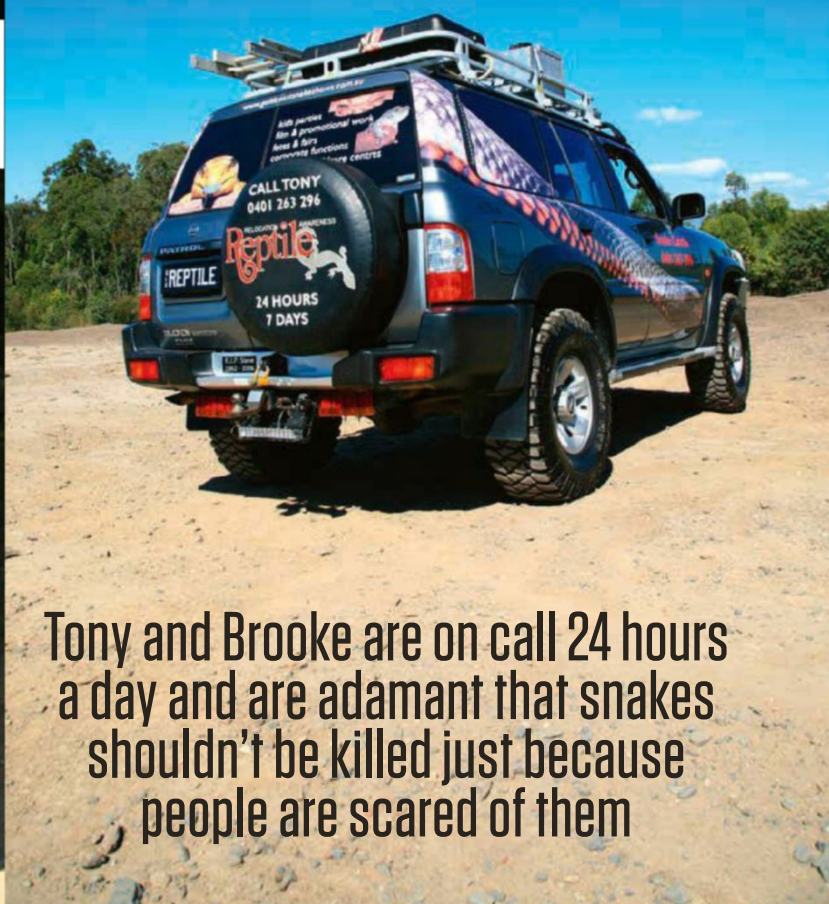


Tony elected to run a huge LED light bar on top of his rig.



### REPTILE

Tony's 3.0-litre turbo-diesel is the rescue rig for snakes that have wandered into the human domain.



Tony and Brooke are on call 24 hours a day and are adamant that snakes shouldn't be killed just because people are scared of them





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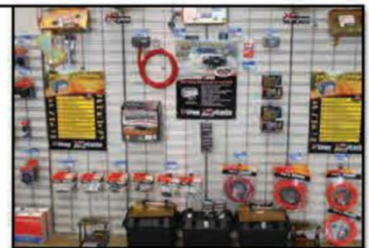
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Brooke's 4.5-litre petrol-guzzling GU transports the reptiles that are used for demonstrations and events.



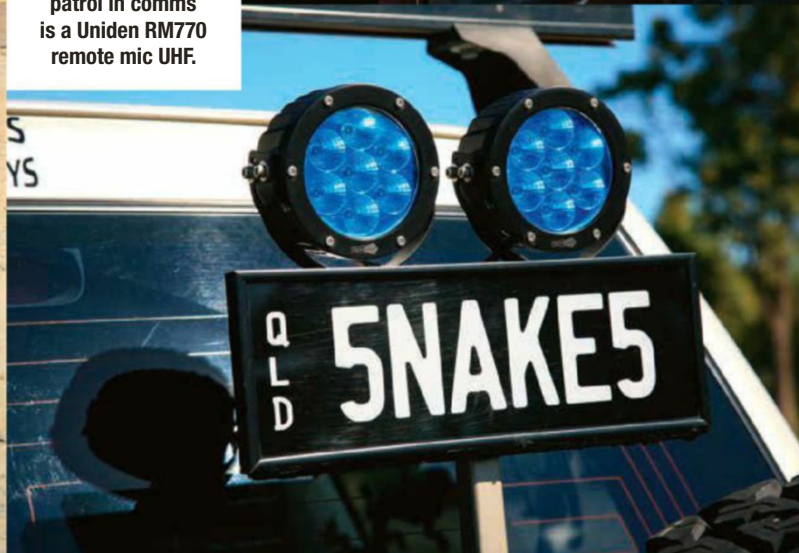
bullbar and side rails as well as a rear, twin wheel carrier and a Uniden RM770 remote mic UHF radio. Both Patrols run LED aftermarket lighting, with Brooke's choice being a pair of rounds on the front bar and a smaller round pair on a telescopic pole attached to the rear wheel carrier. Tony opted for the huge LED bar perched up high on the roof. These are backed up by a pair of halogens and a few smaller LED bars on the front bar. Amusingly, Tony's Patrol features a custom stainless-steel swinging mount for holding his rear LED reversing light. That's a nice way of saying it has been fitted in a dodgy way – but it does have the advantage of folding out of the way when scraping over large rock boulders.

Inside, the Patrols' rears don't have fancy all-inclusive kitchens or roll-out drawer systems; rather, both have cargo barriers and the relevant boxes and compartments to house snakes and other reptiles.

Another useful extra on Tony's roof rack is a water



Keeping the snake patrol in comms is a Uniden RM770 remote mic UHF.







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Eastern brown snake (above); and a red-bellied black snake (below).



Decent wheel travel takes the Patrol to hard-to-reach off-road places.



tank, as he finds he regularly needs to have a quick wash after capturing reptiles.

Tony and Brooke have devoted their lives to helping save reptiles. They are on call 24 hours a day and are adamant that snakes shouldn't be killed just because people are scared of them. Both are heavily involved in the education of all things scaly, they are avid photographers and are always snapping pics and videos of their animals. Take a moment to check out their website: [www.goldcoastsnakecatcher.com.au](http://www.goldcoastsnakecatcher.com.au)

Oh, and what better way is there to show to the public their commitment than with custom number plates: '5NAKE5' and 'REPTILE'?

## Venomous or dangerous?

**T**ONY and Brooke informed us that most snakes' fangs are short and, provided you're wearing tough footwear and thick, long pants, the chances of being poisoned by one of Australia's highly venomous snakes are low. I reckon hiking boots and jeans have probably saved hundreds of lives – the good-old double pluggers aren't the smartest choice of footwear sometimes.

Tony also told us the best thing to do when you come across a snake is to leave it alone, as Australia has some of the most deadly snakes in the world. Don't be a hero and try to pick it up – while the experts make it look easy, there are tricks to the trade. Next, don't go chucking stones at it and definitely don't set off on a beheading mission with the shovel. You might get lucky with your first swipe, but if you miss, chances are, the snake will be quicker than you and you'll end up wrapping a bandage around a snake bite.

Oh, you don't carry one of those? You should. When applied correctly, bandages are proven to save lives by slowing the movement of venom in your body's lymphatic system – the fat layer just under your skin. The pressure bandage grants life-saving time to get help. The more you wail and flop around, the more the venom will flow through your body, making it harder for someone to save your life.

Tony said, if you are bitten, there is no need to catch or kill the snake to identify it. The best thing to do is to mark the bite area with a pen or marker (just in case you pass out and can't assist), apply the compression bandage, keep calm and get help on the double. Once the doctors have swabbed the bite area, they can determine the type of snake and provide the relevant anti-venom to get you back on your feet.

As for Tony's list of most venomous snakes in Australia, at number five is the Death Adder, followed by the tiger snake, the coastal taipan and the common brown snake. The most venomous is the western taipan.

"Don't be confused about most deadly and most venomous," Tony said. "While the western taipan is the most venomous land animal on the planet, it has very short fangs, lives in remote areas and is relatively well behaved."

"Meanwhile, the common brown snake," Tony said, "is found from the bottom end of Australia right up to the top and covers every type of landscape in eastern Australia. It strikes 12 times in two seconds and has the second most powerful venom and the shortest fuse of them all. Because of this they are considered the most dangerous."

Tony also told us that the red-belly and eastern brown are the most commonly encountered venomous snakes, while most bites are courtesy of the eastern brown, due to its "highly strung personality".

There's one last point Tony wanted to make clear: "Brown snakes aren't always brown in colour. They vary in colour and pattern, making them hard to identify for non-experts."

Tony's website ([goldcoastsnakecatcher.com.au](http://goldcoastsnakecatcher.com.au)) is the culmination of over 20 years' experience and features a huge array of snakes as well as heaps of other great info.



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# Follow the sun

WORDS AND PHOTOS RON AND VIV MOON

In the Murray-Sunset National Park there's an east-west track that offers solitude, history and sandy four-wheel drive tracks, as Ron and Viv Moon discover.









**T**he Murray-Sunset NP is Victoria's largest national park, and covers some 6770km<sup>2</sup> of sand dunes, mallee scrub and saltbush plains in the far north-west of the state.

The route we traversed starts easily at the near-deserted Nowingi, about 44km south of Mildura on the Calder Highway. Originally, the track had followed the old railway alignment west across the Raak Plain when gypsum had been hauled from the normally dry lakes. Today, the built-up route is one of the easiest ways to access mallee country and the national park.

Less than 40km from the highway is Rocket Lake, the biggest lake in the area. You can camp beside the lake, with a good view over the lakebed and, while the lake is normally dry, the track across the lakebed is officially closed to traffic, as it can get extremely boggy when even just slightly damp.



There's plenty of red dust. Make sure your rig is expedition ready.

Remnants from a time when cattle grazing took place in the area.





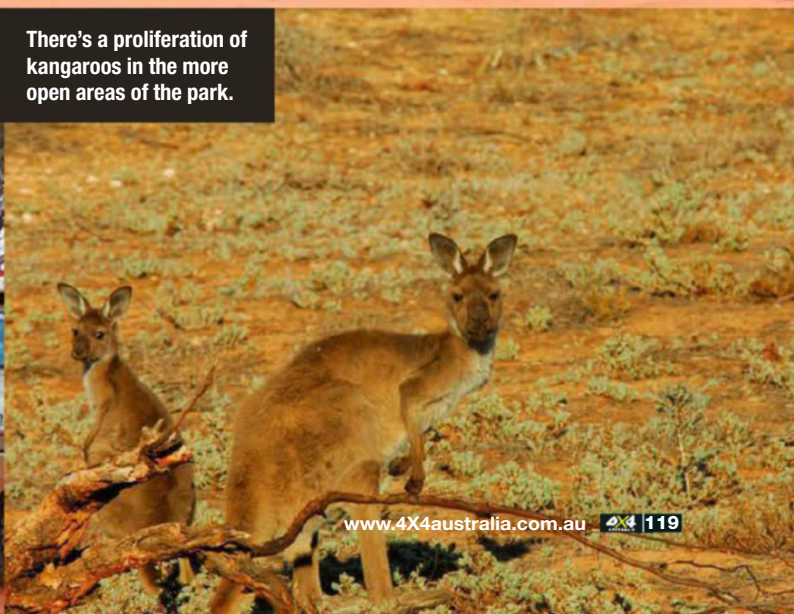
TK➤

Less than 40km from the highway is Rocket Lake, the biggest lake in the area



Access to the renovated Mopoke Hut is via 4x4-only tracks.

There's a proliferation of kangaroos in the more open areas of the park.

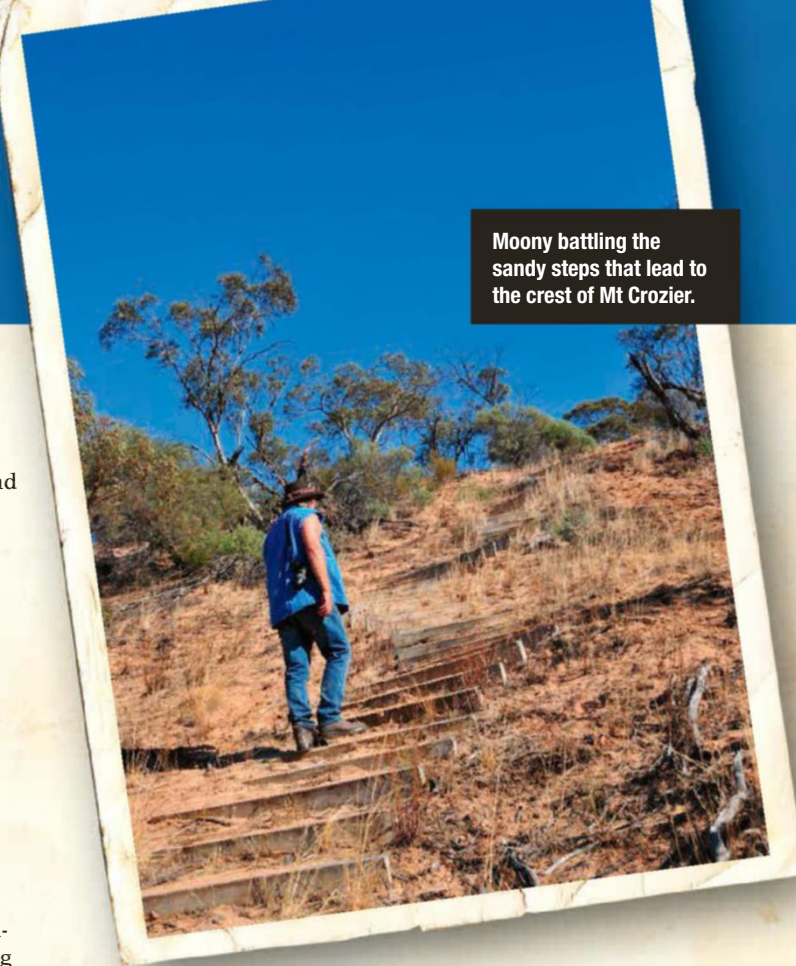




From the southern edge of Rocket Lake you can head in any direction, but to cross the desert we prefer to head south on Rocket Lake Track to Last Hope Track and Mopoke Track before heading into Mopoke Hut.

This hut is hardly an oldie but, being built in 1962, it still harks back to a time when cattle was mustered and driven south by local graziers. The hut has been renovated by the local 4x4 club and the small camping area behind it has fireplaces, tables and a toilet. This is an enjoyable spot to spend the night and the area has a rich variety of birdlife to enjoy (more than 300 species of birds have been recorded). Remember to collect firewood from along the tracks at least 1km away from camp. This will help preserve the area around the hut.

From here, the track south to Honeymoon Track and west to Honeymoon Tank is a sandy run. From the tank, you can head north to Mount Crozier, which, at a whopping 90m, is the second highest sand dune in the park. The highest dune in the region is also in the south-eastern area of the park: the 105m tall dune found along



Moony battling the sandy steps that lead to the crest of Mt Crozier.

There is an expansive view of, well, just scrub; the view hasn't changed for millennia!

## TRAVEL PLANNER

**NOWINGI** on the Calder Highway is 490km north-west of Melbourne. It has no facilities.

Murrayville is 110km west of Ouyen on the Calder Highway and 245km south-east of Adelaide, SA. It has fuel, a store, a good pub and a small pleasant caravan park.

The best map for the region is *Meridian's Victoria's Deserts 4WD Map*.

The best book, which covers the whole region, is *Mallee Tracks* by Jill Nickolls and Anne Angel.

The best time to go is in early spring for the wild flowers, but anytime except high summer is fine.



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DEALER ENQUIRIES WELCOME





Aptly named Pink Lakes are pink due to a high concentration of salt.



the extension of the Mopoke Track and south to Mount Jess is staggering (okay, I'm jesting a little).

Back at the base of Mount Crozier there's a pleasant camping area tucked in among the scrub. There's also a walking trail with a short, steep set of sandy steps up to the crest of the dune. From its lofty summit, there is an expansive view of, well, just scrub; the view has not changed for millennia!

At the track junction near Honeymoon Tank, you can also head south to the Pink Lakes section of the park. This is the oldest protected area (declared in 1979) of the now much-expanded national park. Around the Pink Lakes there are a number of camping areas but, as this area is easily reached from the Mallee Highway a little farther south, the camps are often occupied.

Still, while you are in this area there are a few good walks to enjoy around the often water-filled lakes and along the old tramlines that once carried salt. On the north-eastern edge of Lake Crosbie, an outdoor 'salt museum' displays a few relics from bygone days, with



**Rockholes Track leads to a once-important Aboriginal watering point that's still important for bird and animal life**







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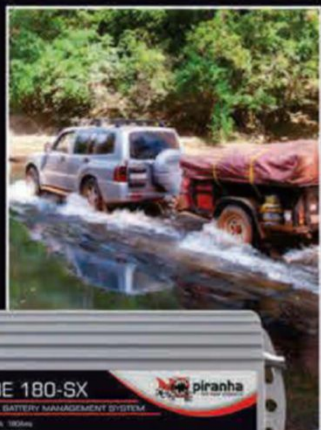
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information boards to explain what went on.

From near Lake Crosbie, you can head north on Grub Track to Honeymoon Track again and then dodge around some largish salt lakes, some man-made tanks and an impressive set of cattle yards beside the track. At the yards you'll join Sunset Track for the 45km run west to the park boundary. The track is sandy in places, skirting through some different vegetation types (there are more than 600 species of plants in the park). You'll often see kangaroos through here, too, especially in the more open areas, and small mobs of feral goats.

At the western edge of the park you'll find the Rockholes Track, which leads north to a once-important Aboriginal watering point that is still important for bird and animal life. Sadly, you can't camp at the Rockholes, but nearby there are plenty of spots to throw down a swag, or to park the camper.

From the Rockholes (we've only ever found a 'rockhole'), you can head north and west to follow the Border Track north or, like we did, turn south to end your adventure at Murrayville on the Mallee Highway, just 21km east of the South Australia-Victoria border. 

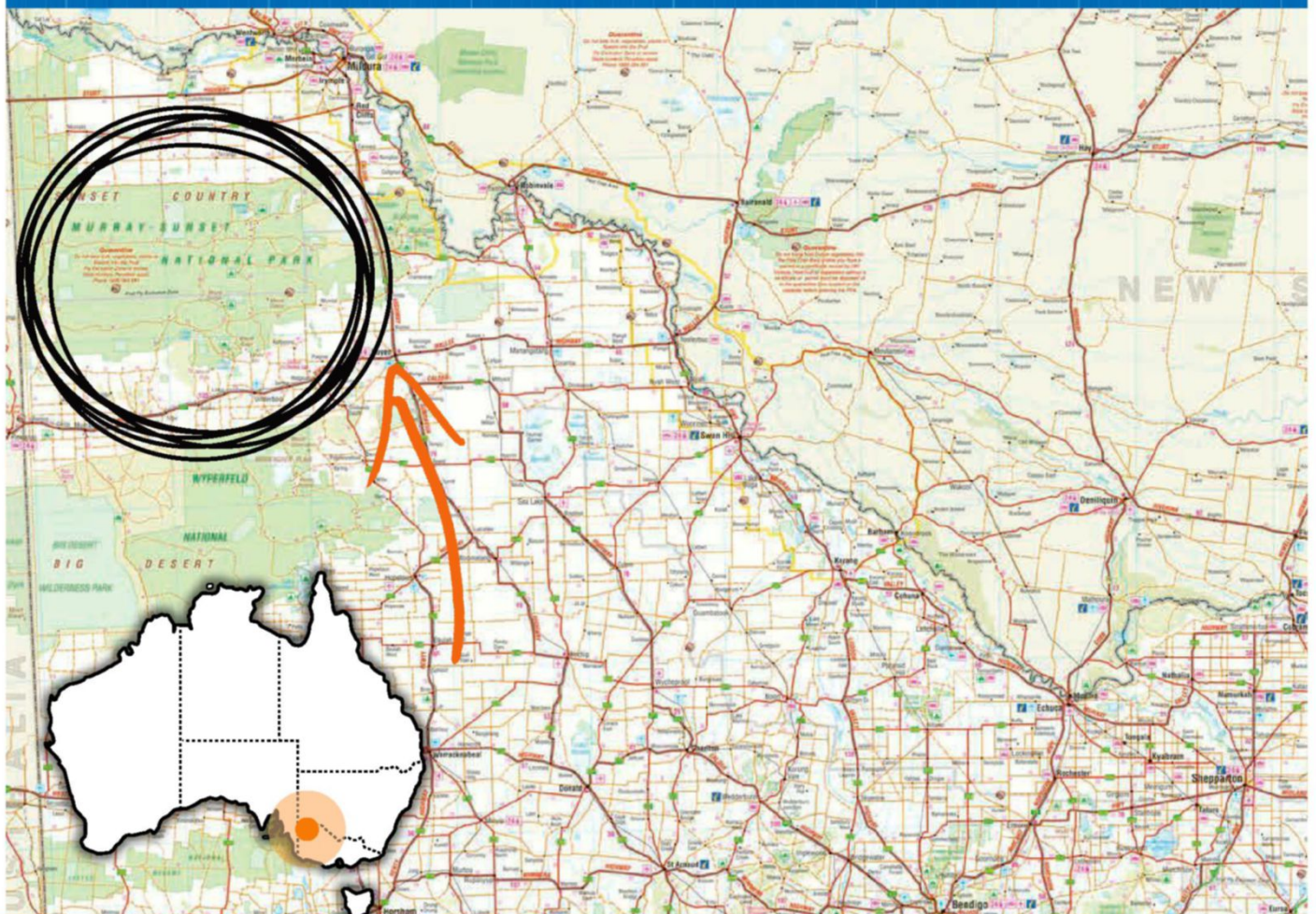


Cattle yards used to inhabit the once-popular farming area.



Many of the lakes in the NP have been toiled for gypsum and salt.

## MURRAY-SUNSET NATIONAL PARK, VICTORIA





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## DRIVEN

MERCEDES-BENZ U430  
& 6X6 ZETROS







This is the first Unimog U430 in the country; we drove it as a spreader but imagine a camper on the back.



# MOG BLOOD

With great power come great possibilities. Almost nothing can stand in the way of these two super-tough blood-brothers.

WORDS MATT WOOD PHOTOS SUPPLIED

**S**o you reckon the inside of the Land Cruiser is getting a bit too snug for those long camping trips? Looking for something larger with a go-anywhere attitude? Or maybe you just want the perfect rugged platform for your dream motorhome?

Well, Mercedes-Benz may have just the right expedition truck for you. Sure, the Mercedes-Benz Unimog has been around forever, but a new model has just landed in Australia: the U430. The baby of the mog range, it is as much a tractor as it is a truck, and it is essentially a tool carrier – something to mount all types of equipment to, from mowers to snow ploughs and more.

Its brother, the big 6x6 Zetros, ups the ante, but you'll need a heavy rigid licence to steer it. The constant six-wheel-drive Zetros has a military background, although the Australian Defence Force has chosen to use MAN for its future 6x6 trucks. The Zetros, nonetheless, is still here as a niche, go-anywhere truck.

We took both trucks for a spin. The U430 Unimog was the first of the new models to land in Australia, and this one is being used as a spreader, so the drive we took it on wasn't too gnarly. But we did do some serious off-roading with the big Zetros.





Portal axles give the Mog plenty of ground clearance.

### LITTLE BROTHER: U430 UNIMOG

The constant all-wheel drive U430 Unimog is powered by Benz's Euro 6, 7.7-litre OM 936 engine, which creates 223kW and 1200Nm of twisty force. Behind the BlueTec donk is a dual-range, eight-speed, preselect, semi-auto tranny, which gets power to the dirt via the Mog's famed portal axles.

The 430 we drove had also been optioned with CTI (Central Tyre Inflation) to help keep the little truck afloat in the muck. Another interesting feature is the Work Mode of the UG 100 transmission, which turns the semi-auto into a hydrostatic transmission for off-road work. This means no changing gears, or braking or using the clutch – just use the go-pedal.

On road, the Unimog uses a semi-auto, preselect tranny. You select the gear on the armrest selector and then push the clutch all the way to the floor to engage the selected gear. It's a little counterintuitive, but you get the hang of it pretty quickly.

With a couple of tonnes of lime in the back, we headed to a local equestrian centre so we could have a play in the grass. The

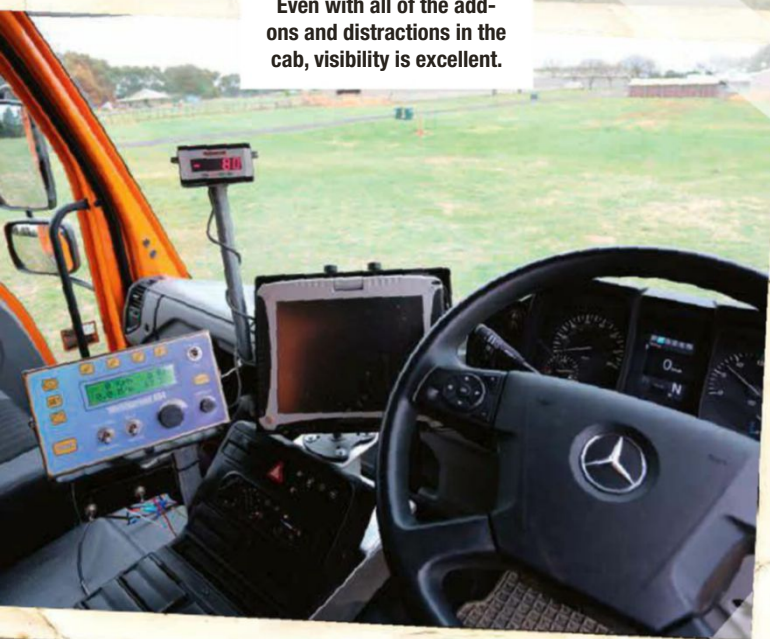
U430 will take a 4.5-tonne payload with the spreader body on the back. Even with half a load in the truck's tray, the driver can still feel a high centre of gravity as the Mog rocks on its coil springs when cornering.

The 7.7-litre engine seems to have enough huff to haul the little truck along, but with a vehicle like this it is all about the gearing. Driveline noise is surprisingly good and, on the open road near the little Benz's 90km/h limit, the dominating sound is the roar of the tractor-like off-road tyres.

The truck's right-hand-drive conversion can be slightly off-putting. The steering box remains on the left and is joined to the steering wheel by a shaft that runs up into the left-hand side of the dashboard and then across the right-hand side of the cab.

The U430 is available with a feature called Vario Steer, which means that the steering wheel and instrument cluster can be unclipped and shifted across the cab for dual-control applications. The machine we tested wasn't equipped with Vario Steer, but the shaft configuration remained, which explains the layout. That said – the little mog steered fine both on- and off-road.

Even with all of the additions and distractions in the cab, visibility is excellent.



Even with half a load in the U430's tray, the driver can still feel a high centre of gravity as the mog rocks on its coil springs when cornering



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The Zetros is a very hard truck to review, because it's hard to find the limitations of a vehicle that's designed to go anywhere

### BIG BROTHER: ZETROS 6X6

The Mercedes-Benz Zetros 6x6 takes off-roading to another level. It's kind of ugly, brutish and cool at the same time. The odd-shaped cabin means it will fit into the cargo hold of a military transport aircraft; indeed, someone from Daimler recently suggested that I could drive one out of an aeroplane. I'm not sure what they were trying to say to me...

The Zetros uses a Euro 5, 7.2 litre OM926 LA engine, with 243kW and 1300Nm. Tranny options include a 3000 Series, six-speed Allison auto or a nine-speed Benz, synchro manual.

The Zetros is a constant all-wheel drive that uses a two-speed transfer case, which gives you a choice of 1.00:1 for road use or 1.69:1 for belting around the bush. All axles use a planetary hub-reduction drive and diff-locks are standard, front, center and rear. The whole kit and caboodle sits on steel parabolic springs. This all means it's a pretty tough character.

The trouble is, it's a very hard truck to review, because it's hard to find the limitations of a vehicle that is designed to go anywhere. So, as I rolled along the freeway at 90km/h at 2000rpm, where the Zetros felt most comfortable, I began to fantasise about what I could do with the beast. Driving though a house seemed like fun, but not many people would have a sense of humour about that. Pushing over trees for laughs wouldn't win me many friends, either.

Out in the bush, this thing ate any obstacle we pointed it at. It flattened mounds of dirt and climbed hills that would make a Land Cruiser squirm. In fact, it became very clear that the only way we were going to unsettle this thing would've been with an improvised explosive device or some sniper fire.

The combination of chassis flex and parabolic springs did an excellent job of keeping all six tyres on the ground while roaring through the scrub. The Allison behaved quite well and is a nice, quiet installation. It didn't appreciate being fiddled with in the bush, however, and it was hesitant to make manual downchanges at times. But it's hard to ignore the tractability benefits of having a torque converter in an off-roader like this one.

Having a bonnet out front makes for a much better ride than with a Unimog, and cab access is also very easy for a big off-roader. The only downside is visibility, compared to the mog, but it's also a much bigger truck. The accelerator pedal position is a little awkward, too, as the switch to right-hand drive means that there's some wheel-arch intrusion under the pedal area. But, to be honest, I was too busy hanging on the steering wheel and making juvenile whooping noises to notice. In between evil chuckles I even managed to notice that the Benz donk did a nice job of hauling the Zetros down rutted tracks and up hills.

And you can throw it out of a plane. 🚀



For a vehicle of this size, wheel articulation is simply fantastic.



The Zetros uses an Allison auto but can be specced with a nine-speed, synchro manual.





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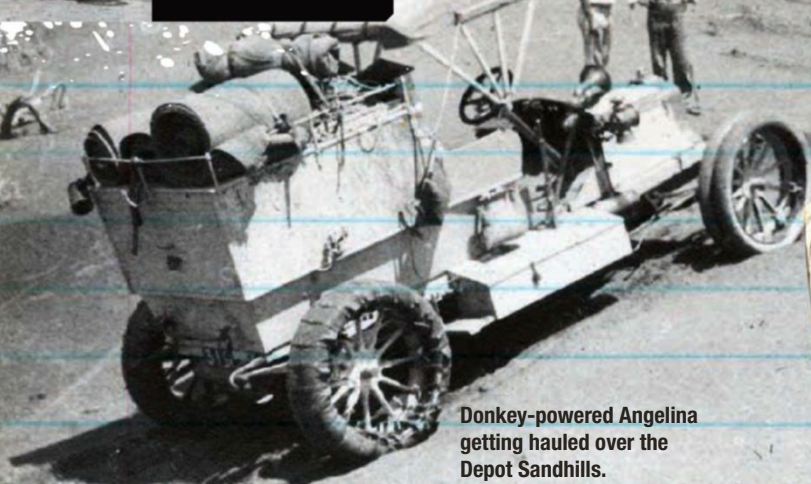
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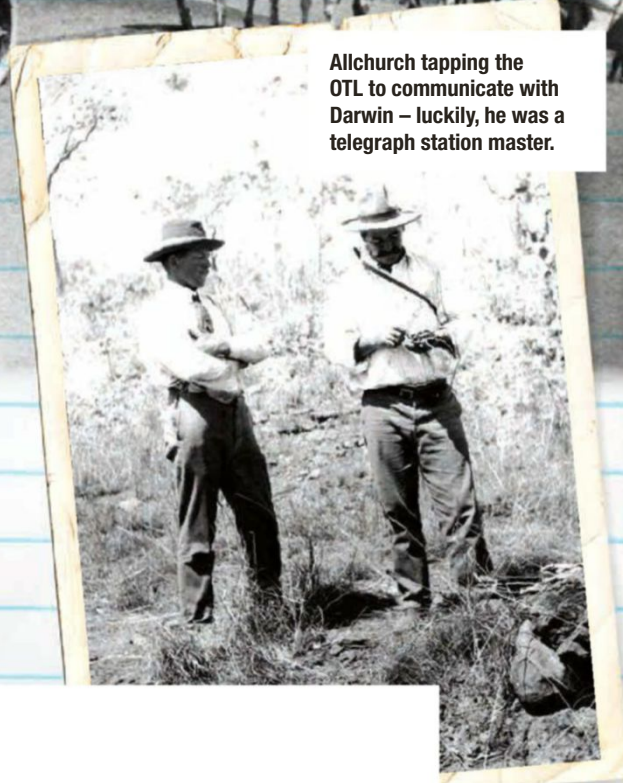
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Donkey-powered Angelina getting hauled over the Depot Sandhills.



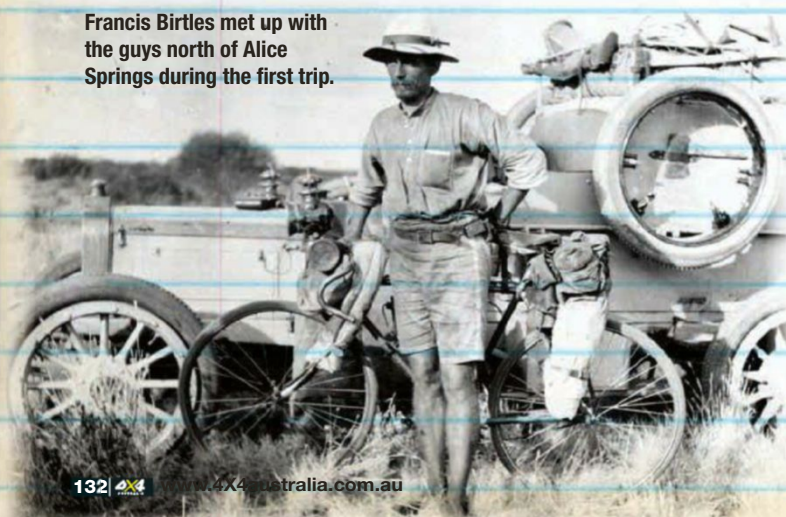
Allchurch tapping the OTL to communicate with Darwin – luckily, he was a telegraph station master.

WORDS RON AND VIV MOON PHOTOS NATIONAL MOTOR MUSEUM AND RON MOON

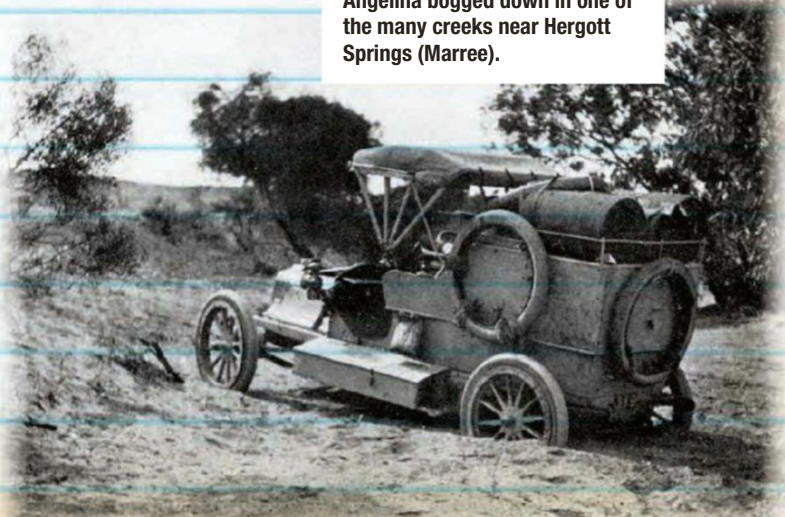
# Talbot Trailblazers

At the dawn of the motoring age, adventurers Harry Dutton and Murray Auger drove a 19kW Talbot through the heart of Australia, from north to south. More than 100 years on, we follow their tracks.

Francis Birtles met up with the guys north of Alice Springs during the first trip.

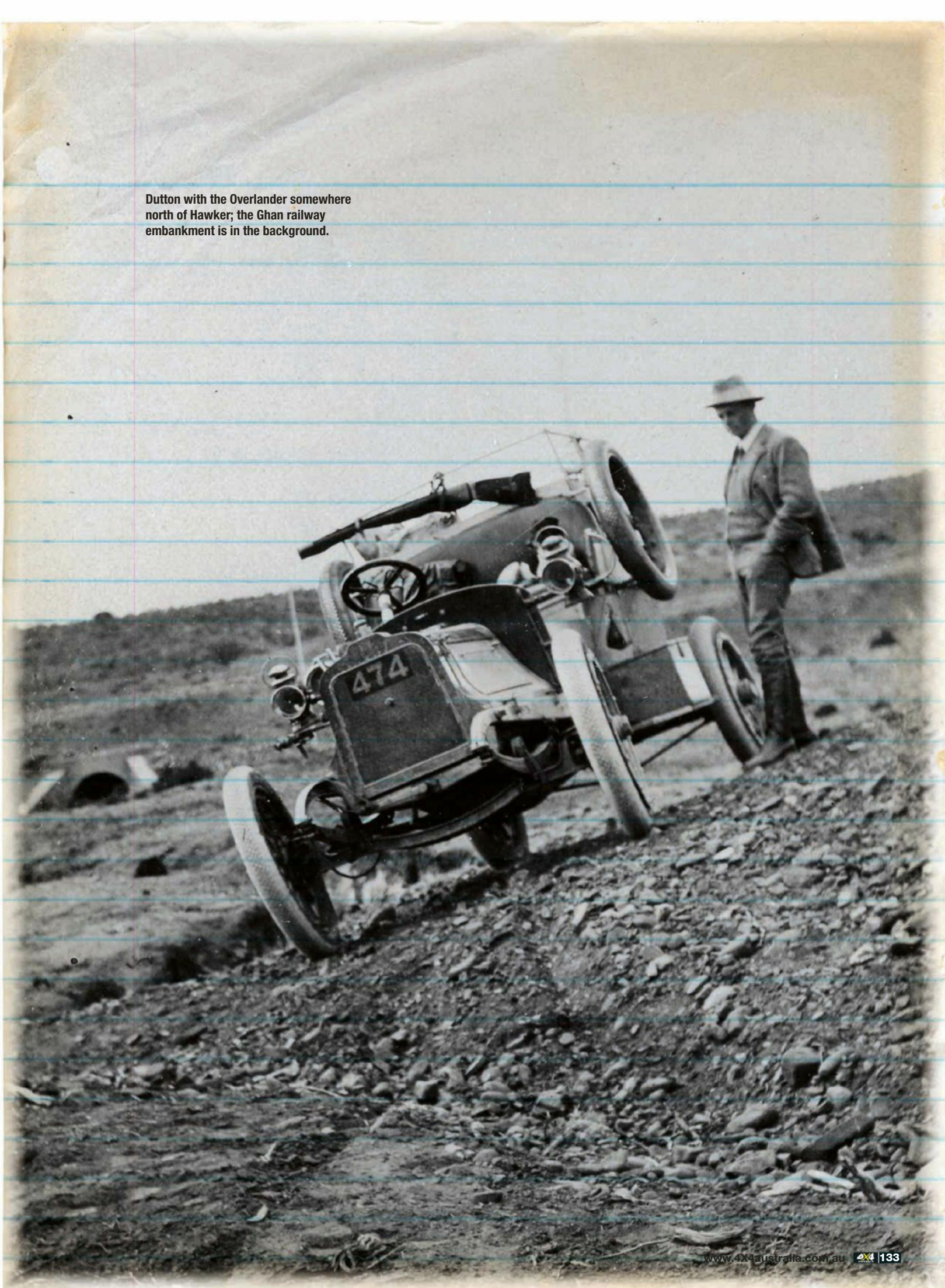


Angelina bogged down in one of the many creeks near Hergott Springs (Marree).





Dutton with the Overlander somewhere north of Hawker; the Ghan railway embankment is in the background.





# The continent crossed

**Darwin**  
FINISH

**1908**

**2**  
YEARS

**2**  
ATTEMPTS

**2**  
CARS

**3400**  
km

**Adelaide**  
START

**W**

hen a party of three weather-beaten men drove in to Darwin on August 20, 1908, in an equally weather-beaten British-made Talbot motor car, they became the first to drive a car across the Australian continent.

It was a feat that had taken two years, two tries and two cars, and only after 42 days and their second attempt did they manage to break down the tyranny of distance between Adelaide, the capital of South Australia, and Port Darwin, then the 'capital' of the Northern Territory of South Australia.

At this stage of the motor car's evolution, 'motorists faced a hostile society of luddites, horse-loving reactionaries, regressive law makers and overzealous police', Dr Kieran Tranter writes in his article *'The History of the Haste-Wagons'*.

There were only about 500 cars registered in South Australia; the car of the masses, the

Ford Model T, was yet to be introduced to Australia; and the first west-east crossing by vehicle, by Francis Birtles (see *4X4 Australia's* June 2013 issue), was still a few years away.

Harry Dutton, who owned the Talbot, was a 28-year-old heir to a pastoral fortune. He lived at his family home of Anlaby Station just outside Kapunda, north-east of Adelaide. In 1907 it was decided that he would attempt the first south-north crossing of the continent, a distance of about 3400km.

With him would be Murray Aunger, who Harry's father had recommended as the companion for the trip. Murray had helped establish the Lewis Motor Works in SA in the late 1890s, and he built the first car in the state in 1900. The Lewis company was by 1907 a major supplier of cars to wealthy South Australians. Murray was the brain and the muscle behind the crossing attempts, and Harry was to later say, "the trip's success was attributable entirely to the ability of Mr Aunger". Murray, a whizz at anything mechanical, also went on to hold a number of Australian motoring records.

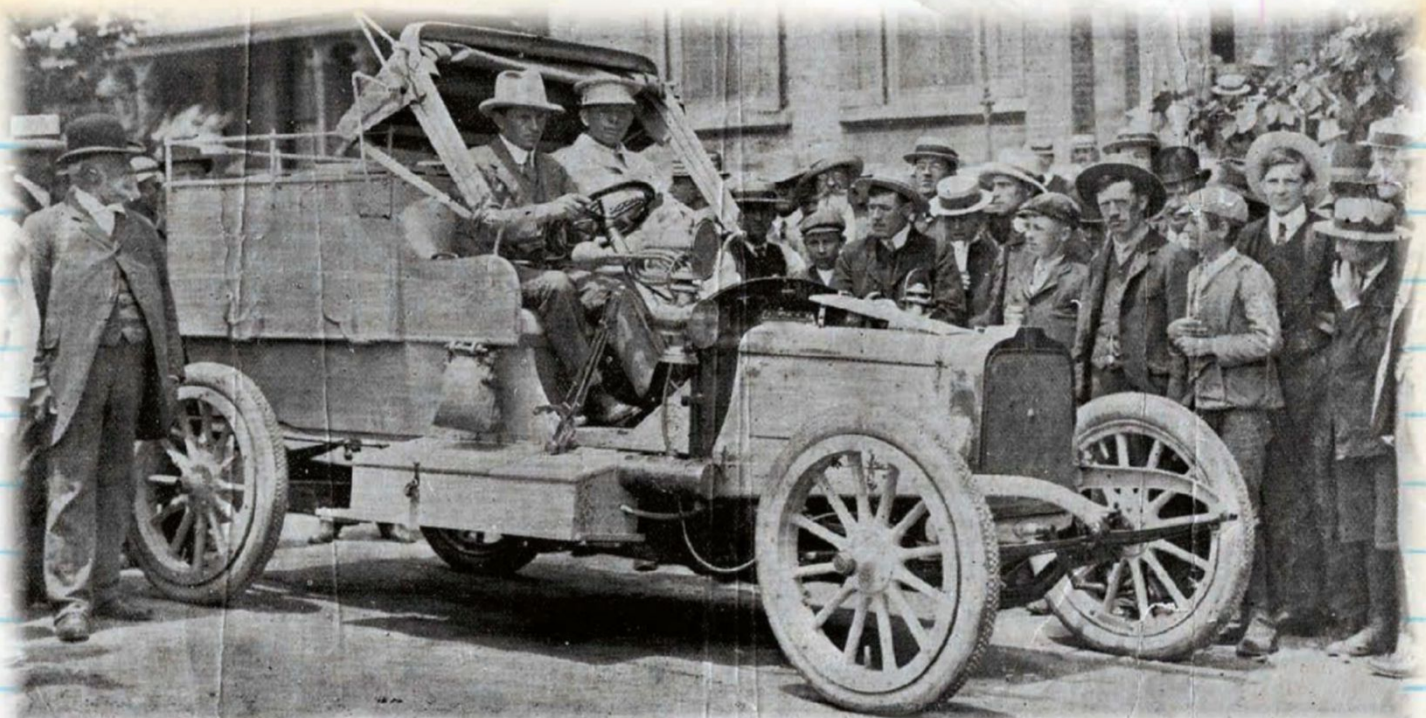
The first south-north attempt started in Adelaide on November 29, 1907, in a 15kW Talbot motor car they'd christened, 'Angelina'.

**At this stage of the car's evolution, motorists faced a hostile society of luddites, horse-loving reactionaries, regressive law makers and overzealous police**



A rocky pass cutting through the MacDonnell Ranges.





The Talbot cars, built by Clement-Talbot Limited in London, quickly gained a reputation for being well-made, efficient and fast, and it was the first car, in 1913, to cover 100 miles (160km) in one hour. They were also expensive; a factory refurbished chassis was advertised at the time for £450, and a body for £350. That was more than most complete new cars when the average annual wage in Australia was just £158 per year!

A four-cylinder 3770cc water-cooled engine with mono-cast cylinders and a bore and stroke of 100mm x 120mm powered the vehicle. It had a rated output of 20hp (15kW). The 1908 model had its power increased to 25hp (19kW) and had a recommended cruising speed of around 75km/h.

These English cars often blew out, or dripped, more oil than they actually used, as they had no oil seals. Water use was also considerable, although the Talbots were equipped early on with a water pump, which made them more suited to Australian conditions than many other vehicle makes. The vehicles would also need greasing regularly, with a recommended greasing interval of just 900km.

**Top: Dutton at the wheel and Auger as passenger, ready to depart Adelaide on the first trip north with Angelina.**

**Above left: Crossing the muddy Neales River near the historic Algebuckina Bridge south of Oodnadatta.**

**Above right: More rocky country through the MacDonnell Ranges.**

The vehicle weighed around 1280kg and had a wooden body with a box featuring vertically opening doors in the rear. Its wheelbase was 9 feet and 8 inches long (2.95m) and its wheel track was 4 feet and 7 inches wide (1.4m).

The Talbot was fitted with wooden-spoke, artillery-type wheels originally running clincher-type tyres of about 35 inches by 5 inches (880mm x 120mm). Because tyre pressures of 60psi tyre were standard, they were highly susceptible to blowouts and coming off the rim.

Dutton or Auger never mentioned that, and they reported having only three punctures for the whole of the second trip. They probably ran lower tyre pressures because of the rough, mainly sandy terrain (and slow going), or maybe they used Michelin all-terrain-type tyres with a steel stud tread pattern; that's a tyre brand that is still known for its great off-road rubber, although the steel studs have gone.

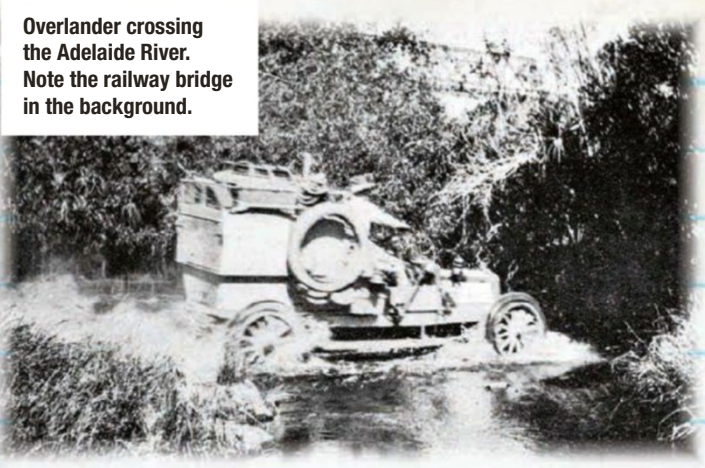
The front wheels were on a standard axle on semi-elliptical springs. The live rear axle was on half-elliptic springs and a transverse spring, giving the rear suspension a great degree of flexibility to



Thick scrub delayed their way just 9km from Port Darwin.



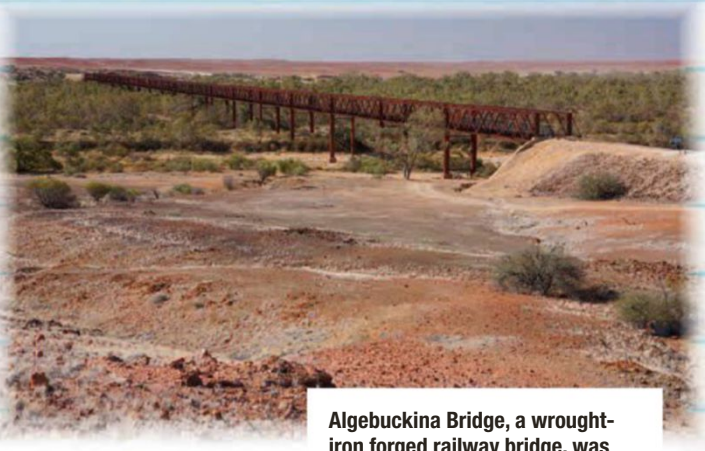
Overlander crossing the Adelaide River. Note the railway bridge in the background.



The Oodnadatta Track is 620km of outback dirt between Marree and Marla.



Algebuckina Bridge, a wrought-iron forged railway bridge, was opened in 1892.



Overlander using all of its 25hp to charge through Edith Creek.





cross rough terrain; there were no shock absorbers.

The gearbox was a three-speed unit and included a reverse gear, while the diff was of a conventional bevelled gear drive with fully floating hubs. The footbrake operated on the transmission, while the handbrake operated a contracting band on the rear wheels. There were no front brakes!

The vehicle was equipped with kerosene lamp lights, a speedometer and a gradiometer. Attached to the sides were a shovel, pick and an axe, while a rifle and a block and tackle made it into the survival/recovery kit. A complete set of spare tyres and a vulcanising kit for repairing both covers and tubes were also carried, along with assorted spare parts. Provisions for a week found a spot in the heavily loaded vehicle, which had been modified to carry 385 litres of petrol. All up the vehicle weighed more than two tonnes.

Extra supplies of petrol and oil were sent ahead to Oodnadatta (the rail head for the Ghan Railway at the time), Alice Springs, Katherine (then called Catherine Creek), and Pine Creek, the latter just 225km south of Darwin.

The week before they set out, the car was tested in the sand hills of Henley Beach. *The Kapunda Herald* newspaper reported, "... with grades of one in seven,

the Telegraph Station, and the *Melbourne Table Talk* weekly magazine reported later that month, "...that he is perfectly satisfied that the notorious Depot Sandhills, which extend for twenty five miles between Horseshoe Bend and Alice Well, and of which overlanding cyclists have always given such a lurid report, are too much for any car without outside assistance."

The report from Harry Dutton continued: "The country was practically a billowy sea of soft sand. When the 20hp Talbot was set at the stiff inclines the loose drift-sand offered no resistance to the tyres, which simply spun round at terrific speed and tore great gaping holes into the ground. Block and tackle were tried without success and even when the car had the assistance of a team of donkeys to haul it over the stiffest pinches there was considerable difficulty in steering the car, for the front wheels sank so deeply into the soft sand that it banked up in front of the front axle and had to be shovelled away. With a temperature of 114 (45°C) in the shade, it can easily be imagined what Messrs. Dutton and Aunger went through out on the barren sandhills. So far they have experienced no trouble with the car, which is standing the rough use splendidly."

**With a temperature of 45°C in the shade, it can easily be imagined what Dutton and Aunger went through out on the barren sandhills**

and though the wheels sank to the axles, the car ploughed through the sand without difficulty. The car is cream colored [sic], and not ungainly in appearance."

Once the expedition set off, for the first couple of hundred kilometres after leaving Adelaide, the roads were good and the progress was excellent. But once they left the small town of Hawker, in the heart of the Flinders Ranges, the route followed the Overland Telegraph Line (OTL) and the horse track that ran beside it.

As they skirted around Lake Eyre, numerous dry and sandy creeks were crossed and, as the *Brisbane Telegraph* reported, "because of the steepness of their banks and the sandy character of their beds, in which the car wheels spun around uselessly, the motorists were obliged to construct corduroys in order to enable the car to negotiate these crossings."

But even tougher going was ahead. When they reached Alice Springs on December 16, Harry Dutton wired from

The two men and the tough Talbot pushed on through the rocky barrier of the MacDonnell Ranges and out on to the plains where they were plagued by tall grass and hidden termite mounds that could have smashed their steering, suspension or diff. Here, in this remote country, Dutton and Aunger met Francis Birtles, who was heading south on one of his many cycling record attempts across and around Australia.

But the team's luck ran out soon afterwards. South of the Tennant Creek Telegraph Station (there was no town at this time), the pinion in the Talbot's diff collapsed and, with the onset of the Wet Season, the vehicle was abandoned. Dutton and Aunger returned south to Oodnadatta on horseback and transferred to a train to travel on to Adelaide.

Undeterred by their failure, Harry bought another Talbot, this one a more powerful 25hp version, known as the Overlander (or '474' – its rego number). Once again it was modified for the trip,



## The Talbots and National Motor Museum (NMM)

ANGELINA was sold and destroyed by a fire in 1915, although its box body is the one you see on Overlander today at the NMM.

The Overlander was used for many years on the Dutton's property, and, in 1959, Harry's sons re-enacted the trip and drove the vehicle once again from Adelaide to Darwin. There was a road by then, but it was a bloody rough one – nothing like today's Oodnadatta Track or Stuart Highway.

In 1977 the Birdwood Mill Museum purchased the vehicle, which was in pretty good condition, having been restored for the '59 trip. It was refurbished again for the 1988 Castrol Bicentennial World Rally. Then in 2008 the Talbot followed – but didn't drive – the original route as the travelling exhibition, Off the Beaten Track.

The vehicle is still in working condition and has pride of place at the National Motor Museum in Birdwood, South Australia.

While it is worthwhile to go to the museum for this vehicle alone, there are many other standouts housed and on display there. These include Tom 'the Birdsville mailman' Kruse's truck; the Leyland Brothers' Land Rover, which was the first to cross the continent from Steep Point to Bryon Bay; and many other truck and motoring classics.

For more on the NMM and the Talbot visit: [motor.history.sa.gov.au](http://motor.history.sa.gov.au)





much the same as Angelina had been, and on June 30, 1908, the two men once again set out from Adelaide.

They reached Hergott Springs (now Marree) on July 4, and then Oodnadatta after another week's hard work in the sandy creeks around Lake Eyre. The report written in the *Brisbane Telegraph* in September 1908 captures some of the harshness of the trip through the sandy country farther north: "Progress through this class of country necessarily was slow, an average of 40 or 50 miles a day being as much as could be maintained ... one occasion a full day's hard work only reduced the distance to Port Darwin by 10 miles ..."

At Alice Springs, the telegraph station officer, Ern Allchurch, joined the two men for the rest of the journey, and 30 days out from Adelaide, after a tough time in among the rocks and narrow passes of the MacDonnell Ranges, they came across the abandoned Talbot, Angelina.

She was in a pretty good state, considering the lengthy time spent out in the elements. Some of the car's woodwork had shrunk, the two rear tyres had perished, the locks were broken and some equipment had gone missing, and there was a healthy collection of spiders, wasps and centipedes to clean out. But it wasn't long before the older vehicle was repaired and mobile once more with

Harry at the wheel, while Murray drove the newer car.

They reached the Tennant Creek OTL station soon afterwards and pushed on. On August 8, as the party approached Daly Waters, they were caught in a vicious scrub fire. They were forced to make a 10-mile (16km) run through the inferno, puncturing three tyres on the fire-blackened stumps; the only punctures suffered on the trip!

Luckily, they made it safely through and a few days later reached the Katherine River, which surprisingly offered no great resistance to the group. The Edith Creek, though, a little further north, by Dutton's report to the *Brisbane Telegraph*, "... proved a much more formidable obstacle. Here it was found necessary to cover the engines and rush the cars through the stream at top speed."

Pine Creek, at the southern end of the then-railway line from Darwin, and 69 miles (111km) north of Edith Creek, was reached after a mammoth one-day run. From there, the men expected a relatively easy drive

**Caught in a vicious scrub fire, they were forced to make a 16km run through the inferno, puncturing three tyres on the fire-blackened stumps**

John and Geoffrey Dutton in the original Overlander arrive in Darwin, in 1959. NT Library photo.







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north but, with the coming of the railway line, the road to Darwin had been almost abandoned; its many bridges had been destroyed and the road had been washed away. Angelina was already struggling in the creek crossings and was sent ahead on the train (the extra 3.5kW that the Overlander sported obviously made a massive difference).


The party pushed on in the Overlander and at Union Town (now abandoned), not far from Pine Creek, the locals confidently predicted that the expedition would end in failure or disaster. With those dire words hanging in the men's ears, they drove on and, at Bridge Creek, a short distance farther north, found themselves looking at a sheer-sided creek, about nine metres deep and with a sharp turn at the bottom.

Now, the reporter with the *Brisbane Telegraph* must have been excited, because I'm pretty sure, staid old Harry wouldn't have written this in his telegram: "It was a case of 'do or die'. Reversing the engines, therefore, and pulling the brakes hard down, they launched the cars over the bank of the creek, and, after a looping-the-loop experience with a serpentine instead of a somersault turn at the bottom of the creek, each found himself rushing at the opposite bank, the steel-shod tyres striking

showers of sparks from the boulders as they struck against them. Pluck and perseverance again were victorious ..."

As they got closer to their final destination, the jungle and verdant scrub closed in around them and they reported being covered in ants, spiders, "and other pestiferous denizens". The party drove in to Port Darwin on the evening of the August 20, 1908, to "public rejoicing" and later a function was held in their honour.

While the men hadn't explored any new country or blazed a new trail across the continent, what they had achieved was hailed as a great achievement right across the continent and proved that the motor vehicle was a force to be reckoned with. The motor car, though, would take another 20 or 30 years to supplant the horse and camel, but in the meantime other adventurous souls read about Dutton and Aunger's trip and set out on their own incredible travels.

100 years on, we take our cue from such great Australian travellers as Len Beadell and the Leyland Brothers, but we all follow in Dutton's and Aunger's footsteps when we travel the Oodnadatta Track, the old Ghan Line and the Stuart Highway north of Alice to Darwin. Tip your hat to them on the next trip north! 

## Thanks

**4X4 Australia** would like to thank the National Motor Museum, especially curator Matthew Lombard for access to the vehicle, for photographs and for answering our numerous requests for information. Big thanks also go to Talbot historian and vehicle restorer, Terry Parker. Pics copyright of the NMM, unless otherwise noted.

What they achieved was hailed as a great achievement right across the continent, and proved the motor vehicle was a force to be reckoned with



Left: Dutton driving Angelina, with Allchurch riding shotgun.  
Right: The Overlander with Aunger at the wheel.  
Gotta love the respectable attire.



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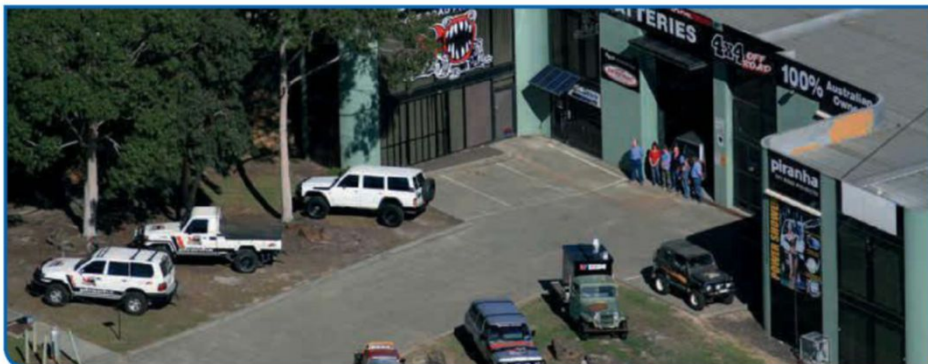


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## THIS MONTH WE TALK TO DENIS DWYER FROM **PIRANHA OFF ROAD**



### ***Describe your business.***

As a Melbourne based manufacturer and distributor for the range of Piranha Off Road products, we are best known for our Dual Battery Management System along with camp lighting, recovery equipment, fridge slides, lighting looms and power shower.

### ***Tell us some of the history of your company:***

Piranha Off Road started out back in the 1980's as Piranha Ignition Systems. This company focussed on upgrading existing distributor/point systems with the then new electronic ignition. Naturally, the technology became common place and by then Alan Johnson's established interest in 4WD eventually led to the development of the electronic dual battery system in 1987. At the time the market was confined to mechanical parallel switching. From the success of the Dual Battery system the Battery Tray grew as a natural progression and now Piranha manufacture over 140 different trays to suit most of the 4WD's on the market. The business continued to grow with the addition of other 4WD specific products that has seen the Piranha business grow to a national brand with distribution across Australia.

### ***Where is the company at now?***

Piranha Off Road has firmly established it's presence in the market place as a supplier of Australian manufactured specialist 4WD products. Based in Boronia, Victoria, Piranha products are now distributed around Australia via a network of Piranha authorised dealers. The dealer network, including the Boronia head office, not only supply products but now actively install all Piranha products. In fact the workmanship combined with the quality products can provide a total

solution for the active 4WD touring market of vehicles and camper trailer/caravans.

What is your companies or products unique selling point?

Buying product from Piranha off Road ensures you are buying products that have been manufactured by Piranha to the highest quality standards or have been selected by Piranha on the basis they are the best we can recommend. The Piranha manufactured products are built with 4WD application in mind and are thoroughly tested within that application. When you come to talk to the Piranha people about your needs you are talking to 4WD enthusiasts who use Piranha products and will proudly show you the products on their own vehicles. Products built to suit the application will last longer and be reliable when you are touring "this land of sweeping plains".

### ***If you could say only two words about your product or service, what would that be?***

Proven, Reliability.

### ***What makes you different from your competition?***

When you purchase a Dual Battery system from Piranha Off Road you are buying a system solution. This is a proven blend of especially developed products to work in harmony with your modern vehicle electronics. Right down to exact cable diameters to ensure all components work together. Backed up by a 5 year Australia Wide warranty when the system is installed by a Piranha trained technician.

### ***What products are you developing now?***

Advanced technology Dual Battery isolator with the ability to regulate a 100 watt solar panel. It will also be capable of being an ignition sense unit or voltage sense. A brand new approach to a touring kitchen, that attaches to a Piranha fridge slide and becomes the "30 Second Kitchen". A culinary centre right in the back of your 4WD!

### ***Who uses your products?***

Piranha products are used extensively by the 4WD touring market along with the camper trailer caravan market. While these are the most common user channels there is also the specialist area's like, marine, forestry, mining and trade vehicles. The Piranha wheel chains for commercial use are being used in the Congo, Africa, mining operations in WA and Qld and some of our products have made their way to Siberia!

### ***What is your greatest achievement?***

Supplying, competitively priced Australian Manufactured battery trays, while maintaining the wide range of 140 different product codes. This is the widest range of battery trays available in Australia today to enable dual battery systems to be fitted to your 4WD. Using Australian supplied steel and local electro-plating facilities we are proud to supply this high quality product to not only 4WD resellers but vehicle dealerships, auto electricians and the mechanical repair outlets.





# GEAR

PRODUCT TESTS & NEW STUFF

## TOUGH AND TOUGHER

The Ford Ranger already looked pretty tough, but with a new Ironman 4x4 bullbar it looks even tougher. The Commercial Deluxe Bar (BBCD038A) is ready for the PX Ranger MkII (without adaptive cruise control). A separate bar is being developed to suit models with adaptive cruise control. They will also fit older PX Rangers. RRP: Commercial Bar, \$1125; Commercial Deluxe Bar, \$1295; Protector Bar, \$1485. Website: [www.ironman4x4.com](http://www.ironman4x4.com)



## SMART STORAGE

The MSA 4x4 Explorer Aluminium Drawer System (patent pending) is packed with technology. The system's patent pending 'Pro-Glide' technology is designed to smoothly handle up to 250kg per pair. Its patent pending MSA 4x4 'Open-stay block' holds the drawer open on steep inclines and the MSA-4x4-designed handle lock system combines ease of use with comfort, safety and security. The optional battery-powered LED strip light that's flush-mounted to the inside of the drawer is another great feature, and the system is compatible with the full range of MSA 4x4 drop slides and fridge barriers. Another plus is its rattle-free construction and dust-resistant design.

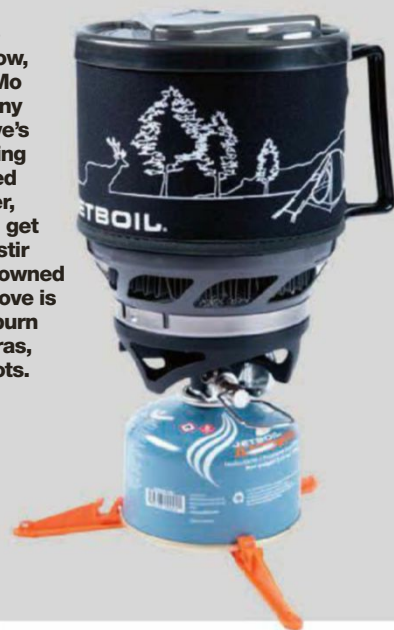
Website: [www.msa4x4.com.au](http://www.msa4x4.com.au)



## I SHALL CALL IT ... MINIMO

Packing JetBoil's all-new MiniMo stove is a no-brainer if you plan on doing any day hikes, MTB rides or canoeing/kayaking. JetBoil went back to the drawing board for the MiniMo to try and broaden its capabilities; most canister stoves are best for boiling water and melting snow, but JetBoil wanted to make the MiniMo more of an all-rounder. So the company concentrated on redesigning the stove's valve and regulator to up the simmering control, allowing more finely controlled cooking. The cooking pot is also wider, with tough metal handles, so you can get your fork in to the pot more easily to stir ingredients. You still get JetBoil's renowned low-temperature performance (the stove is claimed to offer simmer control and burn down to -6°C. There are heaps of extras, including a coffee press and larger pots. RRP: \$239.95

Website: [www.seatosummit.com.au](http://www.seatosummit.com.au)







### LEATHERMAN SIGNAL

Built to Leatherman's usual high standards, the new Signal features 19 tools including a fire starter, whistle, diamond-coated sharpener, needle-nose and regular pliers, wire cutters, saw, hammer, combo knife, bit driver, hex bit driver, bottle/can opener and more. The Signal weighs 212g and when closed is just 11.4cm in length, making it compact enough to fit in your pocket, glovebox or backpack. Leatherman guarantees its products for 25 years, so you know this thing will last out in the field. The aluminium chassis encases the tools and allows quick and easy access to all the tools inside. The saw and (semi-serrated) blade lock out, so they can be used one-handed without fear of lopping off a digit. The screwdriver and can-opener also lock out. Another feature of the Signal is the replaceable wire-cutters – in case you somehow manage to break them.

RRP: \$285

Website: [www.leatherman.com.au](http://www.leatherman.com.au)



### FLICK THE SWITCH

Projecta has developed a DC/Solar Battery Charger that can charge simultaneously from both solar and alternator (9-32V) inputs without the need to manually switch from one power source to the other. The IDC25 'Intelli-Charge' grants owners a three-stage charge of 12V secondary/auxiliary deep-cycle batteries while on the go. The IDC25 can also function as an MPPT (Maximum Power Point Tracking) solar controller up to 25A, maximising the power generated from solar panels. When operating on vehicle power, the unit offers dual charging modes for compatibility with both 'smart' and conventional alternators. The charger is backed by a two-year warranty and can be purchased at all leading transport, automotive and four-wheel drive outlets throughout Australia.

RRP: \$449.00

Website: [www.projecta.com.au](http://www.projecta.com.au)



### YAKIMA FORTIMER

Taking a few bikes with you on your next adventure is a great way to explore around the campsite with your family. The only trouble with lugging bikes around is that they take up significant space and are awkward to load – unless you go with a dedicated bike-carry system, such as this FourTimer from Yakima. The FourTimer (for 50mm tow hitches only) is a brilliant solution for carrying four bikes, and it suits all bikes regardless of frame design, wheel size or suspension set-up. The low tray height makes loading bikes easy, and the FourTimer folds down (with bikes loaded) for access to the rear of your vehicle, and then folds up when not in use. It can also be converted from a four-bike carrier to a two-bike carrier – for us, that's the FourTimer's greatest appeal.

RRP: \$749

Website: [www.yakima.com.au](http://www.yakima.com.au)





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Styled specifically for the new Hilux, the Ascent Canopy features remote central locking via the vehicle key, electronic unlatching of side lift-up and rear windows, a standard roof vent for reducing dust ingress, and an over-rail attachment system for an integrated appearance. The electronic unlatching – combined with frameless windows – provides easy one-handed operation and removes the need for locking hardware on the exterior of the side window glass. A choice of frameless lift-up or pop-out windows is available, providing flexibility to meet individual load requirements. A number of roof rack options and other accessories are available.

RRP: \$4208 (fitted and painted)

Website: [www.arb.com.au](http://www.arb.com.au)



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BlackWolf's new Cuba is a travel backpack with a zip-off daypack. The main pack has an adjustable ErgoFit harness making it light to carry. The 10-litre expansion gusset is great for when back-up carry space is needed. The daypack can zip on and off to the main pack easily, can clip on to or be worn over the front of your body, and it has a laptop padded pocket with dual access and a front RFID protected pocket. This should keep your electronic personal details on your credit cards and passports safe. The packs are lockable and come with locks, in-built rain covers, reflective panels and durable fabrics. There are three capacity options:

Cuba 65L RRP: \$269.99

Cuba 75L RRP: \$279.99

Cuba 90L RRP: \$289.99

Website: [www.blackwolf.com.au](http://www.blackwolf.com.au)



### IPHONE ARMOUR

If you've just forked out for a new iPhone, you'll probably want to protect it. Pelican Products has released new adventure-proof cases for the latest Apple devices. The ProGear Voyager is slender, lightweight and has layers of 'energy-absorbing' materials to protect the new iPhone 6S and 6S Plus. It's also been engineered to military standards for impact and drops. For everyday protection of your phone, the (slightly cheaper) Pelican ProGear Protector is fashioned with an elastomeric copolymer rubber interior to absorb shock and impact. It features an edged lip to deflect energy and cushion the device in times of direct impact.

RRP: Voyager, \$59.95; Protector, \$39.95.

Website: [www.pelicanprogear.com.au](http://www.pelicanprogear.com.au)



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**Garth Morrison**  
Editor  
[www.gosseeaustralia.com.au](http://www.gosseeaustralia.com.au)

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RRP: \$39.00 per one-litre bottle  
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Gravity – it's what makes the world go 'round. Equally important to us, however, is clean drinking water. Katadyn's Base Camp Pro combines both with a system that uses gravity to allow filtered water to flow without the need to pump it. The 10L Camp Pro is claimed to be one of the fastest gravity filters on the market, and it's also the only water filter that easily converts into a camp shower (with an adaptor). At the heart of the compact, foldable water bag is the newly developed Ultra Flow Filter Element. This tech allows a flow rate of up to two litres per minute to filter bacteria, cysts and sediment. The Camp Pro is ideal for up to 10 people and easily hangs on any tree branch. A cleanable filter protector lengthens the filter element's lifetime.

RRP: \$189.95. Website: [www.katadyn.com](http://www.katadyn.com)

### THERM-A-REST NEOAIR VOYAGER

Lightweight, compact when stored, and bloody comfortable; the NeoAir Voyager is the luxu version of the NeoAir range and offers plenty of warmth, courtesy of Therm-a-Rest's WaveCore technology. This tech is based on a single layer of horizontal baffles inside the mat that replace the need for down or synthetic fibres to add insulation. Yep, it sounds like a mad scientist's project, but it works. We've used one of these mats for a few years now in all weather conditions and it has offered a comfortable, warm sleep every time. Aiding that sleep is the Voyager's 64mm inflated height – there's plenty of cush in this compact mat. Another standout feature is its tough construction. The 75D polyester fabric is very robust and – importantly – air-tight. There's been a few nights' camping when I have found rocks and sharp sticks under the mat, but it has never suffered a failure. And it's not too heavy to use for an overnight hiking adventure away from base camp.

RRP: \$209.95

Website: [www.spelean.com.au](http://www.spelean.com.au)





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# What to pack in a recovery kit

WORDS BY DAN EVERETT PHOTOS LAUREN EVERETT

**Y**ou can go bush without a recovery kit, but you really shouldn't. It's as simple as that. At least that's what we've all been told for the past couple of decades. In fact, it's almost impossible to pick up a four-wheel drive magazine without reading that safety and recovery gear should come before just about anything, including your first tank of diesel. The ability to safely and quickly self-extract is something that should be put before any single aspect of off-roading. There isn't a camp oven or light bar that should be higher on your shopping list than the simple bow shackle.

It all sounds good in theory – except we've rarely been taught what should actually be in a recovery kit, or even how to identify or use the components in question. What's included in a recovery kit has more or less been left up to manufacturers.

As a result, customers are often uninformed before plonking down their hard-earned cash, attempting to do things the right way. In this issue of our recovery guide, we're aiming to rectify that. With a camera in hand, we've set out to put together a basic guide of what your kit should have in it, and what each item is actually for.



## SLINGS AND STRAPS

The main items in a recovery bag are slings and straps, and they've all got labels on them listing their intended use, such as snatch strap or tow strap. But they don't come with an explanation of why they're suited to those applications.

If you're reading this magazine, you're obviously the kind of person who wants to know the ins and outs of your equipment and how to safely use each piece. So we're here to help point you in the right direction.

Any recovery kit worth its salt is going to have at least three straps: a snatch strap, a winch extension strap and a tree trunk protector. A more comprehensive kit can include tow straps and load equalising straps, although you can do without those in most circumstances.

The snatch strap should be your go-to recovery device in 90

per cent of situations, but there are a few important things you should be aware of before purchasing or using one. Despite a snatch strap's appearance, it functions more like an elastic band than a rope. In a recovery situation, the strap will expand as you pull it and then attempt to snap itself shut when it reaches maximum stretch. This elasticity smooths out the recovery process and aids in applying more force to the stuck vehicle; the downside is repeatedly stretching the strap will weaken the fibres and lead to premature failure.

Snatch straps have a limited lifespan and should only be used for a handful of recoveries before they're replaced. You'll want somewhere near 25 per cent stretch in the strap and the breaking point should be two to three times the weight of the lightest vehicle being recovered.

Despite looking similar to a snatch strap, a winch extension





strap is never a suitable replacement for the former. They're designed to handle a static load rather than the shock loading from a snatch recovery, and they have a much lower maximum load rating. They are designed to be used in situations where a winching point is farther away than the standard winch rope can reach, or where extra length is required in multiple line pulls.

The final strap you'll find in most kits is a tree trunk protector. For many tree species, losing an outer ring of bark can kill the tree. A tree trunk protector is a thick strap designed to spread the load over a larger area of the tree to prevent permanent damage occurring during winch recoveries. They allow the fitment of snatch blocks to aid in double line pulls or redirecting winching. They can also be used as a load equalising strap between two recovery points, although extra attention should be paid to ensure no damage occurs.

## HARD PARTS

Your recovery kit should also have at least a handful of rated bow shackles, at least one snatch block (only if you have a winch), and a set of heavy-duty leather gloves. More extensive kits can have components such as drag chains as well.

Rated D-shackles are quite common, although the bow shackles found in a recovery kit differ in that they're able to accept a larger strap because of their shape and can handle loads in multiple directions – this is something that is vital in a recovery situation when things aren't always perfect.

As rated bow shackles are expensive to manufacture, there are a large number of cheaper unrated items on the market. While these may have worked once for a friend of a friend, if things go pear-shaped, they can lead to a catastrophic situation. And when safety is on the line, it pays to pay.





## \$20 isn't going to seem important when you're stuck in a ditch with a broken strap

The other major part you'll find in a recovery kit is the snatch block. Despite the name, a snatch block has nothing to do with a snatch recovery and is instead a useful tool for winching. While it's fairly common knowledge that a snatch block can be used in winching situations to effectively double your pulling power, they can also be used to redirect a winch line. If you, or another in your convoy, doesn't have a winch, a snatch block is just dead weight.

With enough line and two to three snatch blocks you can even winch yourself backwards out of a hole, or sideways if things really go south. It's important to note that a snatch block should never be used with winch rope if it has previously been used with steel cable. The steel fibres can become embedded in the block and cause irreversible damage to your rope.

In years gone by the simple go-to was a drag chain. You

just need to look at any 4x4 photo from the '70s or '80s and you'll no doubt see lengths of chain used as bridle straps between recovery points or even in place of a tow strap. There are multiple issues with using a chain in either scenario. A chain isn't able to absorb any energy, making it incredibly dangerous in a shock loading situation. If failure were to occur you'd suddenly find yourself with a section of chain hurtling towards your rear windscreen at fatal speeds. That said, they still have their uses in certain situations where adjustability is required, such as when hand winching; something that's not possible with a strap.

As with anything, you get what you pay for, and safety has no budget. You're not talking big money for even the best you can buy, and saving \$20 isn't going to seem important when you're stuck in a ditch with a broken strap or a shattered bow shackle. 🚗



## What you actually need in a recovery kit

- Snatch strap
- Tree trunk protector
- Winch extension strap
- Rated bow shackles
- Cable/strap dampener
- Snatch block



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## THAT'S EXTREME

WITH AN EXTREMELY CLEVER DESIGN, THESE BRIGHT NARVA HID LIGHTS LIVE UP TO THEIR NAME.

### RATED

AVAILABLE FROM:  
www.narva.com.au

RRP: \$899

WE SAY: Sturdy and  
ridiculously bright.

I HAVE been poking around the darkness with a set of 50W Narva Extreme HID driving lights for more than six months now. Having had the Narva 225s for many years, I can notice some advantages of owning the Extremes.

Don't be put off by the extreme-looking external cage-like mounting bracketry and the 360-degree protective chromoly steel frame – these lights are suitable for touring and general night driving as well as 'extreme' off-roading.

Because the light housing is suspended from the outer framework via rubber grommets, vibration dampening reduces long-term internal damage, and the fastenings are less prone to loosen.

Regarding the actual light throw; one main difference is the driving light's larger spot area, although the spread-light pattern is similarly wide. This equates to a more useable light projection than the sabre-like beam of the 225 spotty – both great lights but different!

Although I've not yet dunked my lights, they are said to be IP67-rated, meaning


they are submersible and feature a Gore-Tex breather to ensure total sealing.

The Extremes are available in halogen bulbs as well, but I've not tested them, so I can only comment on the brightness of the HID bulbs, which are fitted with the latest Gen5 internal ballasts and waterproof connectors. The brackets and outer rings, however, are identical across the range.

The top-mounted knob means tools aren't needed to adjust the light's vertical range to align it on road after loading and unloading weight in to the Land Cruiser. Such adjustments are mainly needed for the concentrated spot light. Any further adjustments (which generally wouldn't be needed) require the relevant tools. The lights have a very deep dish that, combined with the external rings, takes up plenty of real-estate on the bullbar, so be sure you have adequate room.

From corrugated tracks and rough low-range

work to regular highway runs, the lights' mounting brackets have proved sturdy enough to limit annoying vibrations. The actual light is ridiculously bright, so you need to be aware of oncoming motorists and of dipping your lights when approaching reflective road signs.

All up, these lights are well worth the side effects of having people think you're a bit extreme! 







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## LIGHT THE WAY

WHETHER YOU'RE A BOATIE, A CAMPER OR JUST A BIT AFRAID OF THE DARK - YOU'RE SURE TO FIND SOMETHING USEFUL IN PELICAN'S RANGE OF COMPACT LIGHTS.

### 2780 LED HEADLIGHT

This range-topping headlamp has far more options than the 2750 headlamp. But powered by four AA batteries housed in a remote battery pack, it is also more awkward than the 2750, though you do quickly get used to the pack balanced on the side of your head. You know it's there, but it's not inconvenient. It also has far more options, including three-stages of light power plus four different position modes: there's a main/downcast mode, which points straight ahead while a beam also points down in front of you; there's a downcast-only mode, which is perfect when you are reading, or preparing/eating dinner; there's a main beam mode that directs light straight ahead; and there is a flashing mode. In the first mode on the high setting the light produces 430 lumens. Each mode is controlled by a dial on the right side of the unit, with the brightness controlled by a push-button on the end of the dial.

It has three options for a cover - white, black and fluorescent - and it is waterproof to 1m. So for those out there wanting a powerful all-rounder, this one is for you.



### RATED

AVAILABLE FROM: [www.pelicanaustralia.com](http://www.pelicanaustralia.com)

RRP: \$79.95

WE SAY: Simple, compact and easy to use.





### 3310PL LED FLASHLIGHT

For those looking for a new hand torch, I have found it. This one is a cracker. It's light, small and it has beam that's claimed to gleam for up to 240 metres, on the high setting (I didn't measure the distance, but it does go a long way). Its high-performance LED can produce up to 234 lumens, it is waterproof to a metre, and its casing is fluorescent! So you don't have to guess where you have left the torch late at night – it's so bright that you can't miss it.

It comes with a handy wrist strap plus the three AA batteries it needs for operation. It also has a high/low beam control. At low beam it's claimed to have a battery run time of 190 hours – amazing!

### 2750 LED (GEN 1) HEADLIGHT

This headlamp is preferred for its simplicity. It doesn't have a lot of options, but it is compact and easy to use. It comes with three AAA batteries and it was easy to get up and running in no time. I just slapped in the batteries, adjusted the head strap, and away we went.

It has a three light phases; high, 100 lumens; low, 40 lumens; and flashing. The high-power 100-lumen phase has a high-beam distance of 71 metres. At low beam it will run for 12 hours.

It can be tilted forward to suit, it's perfect to light up your dinner plate in the dark, and it is waterproof to a metre. This little cracker has a permanent spot in my truck from here on.



**RATED**  
AVAILABLE FROM: [www.pelicanaustralia.com](http://www.pelicanaustralia.com)  
RRP: \$69.95  
WE SAY: Multipurpose and convenient.

### LIGHT CASE 9000

Aimed at the boatie and those hardcore kayak fishermen out there, this one could be for you. It's waterproof, dust-proof and it floats. It is also the perfect home for your all-important personal items while you play.

The 9000 snaps shut and it comes with a handy hook and carabiner, so it could also be used as a tent or swag light, and its light has three stages – high, medium and low beam – with the low beam lasting an impressive 100-plus hours. It provides 200 lumens on the high setting and it's powered by four AA batteries, which are included. Protected from the elements, the 9000 has several uses, but it's especially great for storing important possessions – for example, mobile phones and keys. They are worth protecting.







# BACK TO THE VISOR

**RATED**  
WE SAY: Australian-made, old-school and high-value.  
RRP: From \$275 (make/model dependent)  
AVAILABLE FROM: [www.roofrackworld.com.au](http://www.roofrackworld.com.au)

**WINDSCREEN SUN VISORS HAVEN'T BEEN FASHIONABLE FOR SOME TIME, BUT THEY ARE STILL A GREAT WAY TO REDUCE HEAT AND GLARE IN YOUR VEHICLE.**

We hadn't given them much thought for several years, but then we saw one on a Troopy in Papua New Guinea and remembered just how great they were. We are talking about windscreen sun visors. Remember them? They have graced the windscreens of many vehicles, including the Holden Kingswood, and you wouldn't have been seen beyond the 'black stump' without one 'back in the day'.


We were struck with nostalgia at the sight of one on a Land Cruiser Troopy negotiating the battlefields of Buna at the end of the Kokoda Track, and we knew we had to have one for the Hilux. But when we got back to Australia, we were surprised that Toyota only offered sun visors as an optional factory extra for the Land Cruiser 70 Series. And so the web search began.

Solid colour-matched models are available as an aftermarket accessory for the Hilux via a few manufacturers, but the price range varies from \$600 to \$800.

Searching on, we found Sunshade Products at Roof Rack World in Adelaide. They manufacture and supply a lightweight aluminium mesh visor for medium and large trucks as well most four-wheel drive vehicles.

For a Hilux, the standard visor costs \$275 with a further \$55 for fitment. With an additional cost, custom fits are available to accommodate snorkels. All visor models have stainless steel mounts, aluminium mesh and piping.

After fitting, the utility of the visor was immediately evident. The instrumentation on the dashboard – and the various aftermarket LCD displays (GPS, tyre pressure gauge, reversing camera, etc) were far easier to see. The sunlight striking the driver and passenger was dappled and diffused. The cabin temperature and glare were markedly reduced, too.

The only downside was a slight hum from the airflow, which would vary for each model and application. 



WORDS SCOTT HEIMAN



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# MONKEY MAGIC

IF YOU'RE OUT BUSH, YOU DON'T WANT TO MONKEY AROUND WHEN IT COMES TO CHARGING YOUR PORTABLE ELECTRONIC GEAR. THESE POWERMONKEY POWER PACKS ARE MAGIC ON THE RUN.



## POWERMONKEY EXPLORER

We have recently been testing Powertraveller's Powermonkey Explorer and Powermonkey Extreme 12V in Papua New Guinea, and both passed with flying colours. They effectively charged our phone, GPS, sat-nav, audio gear and cameras – all while we were on the move.

The Powermonkey Explorer and Powermonkey Extreme 12V belong to a larger family of power packs – which include

the Powergorilla and Powerchimp – under the Powertraveller umbrella. The Powermonkey Explorer comes with a selection of adapters and wall-socket extensions designed to work with

mobile phones, iPods or MP3 players. The power pack includes a 2200mAh battery. This battery can be charged by mains electricity, via your computer, or you can use the in-built solar panel – like we did in Papua New Guinea.

The 2200mAh battery is an excellent size when you consider that most phone batteries are approximately 900mAh. At this rate, the Powermonkey Explorer should achieve between 1.5 to two full charges of your phone.

The variety of connections is impressive, including those for Samsung, LG, Nokia and Sony Ericsson phones, iPod/iPhone, as well as standard connections for devices using the mini or standard USB.

For around \$160, the Powermonkey Explorer power pack will keep you on the run and connected.



**RATED**

AVAILABLE FROM: [www.powerhungry.com.au](http://www.powerhungry.com.au)  
RRP: from \$159.95

WE SAY: Compact, practical and powerful on the fly.

## POWERMONKEY EXTREME

The Powermonkey Extreme is the Explorer's bigger brother and, since its initial launch in 2011, it has only improved. In 2013 it underwent a couple of significant changes, so it can now do everything the Explorer does, and more.

The Powermonkey Extreme houses a massive 9000mAh-capacity lithium polymer battery capable of recharging most 5V devices. However, the most important improvement for 2013 was the change to the Powermonkey Extreme's DC output option.

The standard 5V USB socket remains, but the DC port has been upgraded to output 12V, meaning that it is now capable of recharging SLR camera batteries, portable DVD players, iPads and tablets.

The Powermonkey Extreme is lightweight and compact enough for even the most space-conscious travellers. It also comes with a female car charger socket so you can connect electronic devices to the Powermonkey Extreme when they might otherwise be limited to being recharged in your vehicle.

This adds even more versatility to the Powermonkey range.

The Powermonkey Extreme can be recharged in three ways: via the universal mains charger, via the solar panel, or via USB. The rugged, clam-shell design solar panel offers three-watt max output, allowing full recharge in 18 to 22 hours.

The solar panel on the Powermonkey Extreme can be attached to tents or backpacks via the included Velcro strap. This makes it perfect for the outdoors.

The Powermonkey Extreme weighs 242g and measures 152 x 59.5 x 28mm, while the solar panel weighs 214g, measures 171 x 90mm and is 18mm deep when folded. The solar panel is Polysilicon and offers photovoltaic efficiency up to 17 per cent.

Waterproof for 30 minutes down to one metre – and shock resistant – the Powermonkey Extreme is perfect for the outdoor enthusiast and professional adventurer alike.



**RATED**

AVAILABLE FROM: [www.powerhungry.com.au](http://www.powerhungry.com.au)  
RRP: from \$249.95

WE SAY: a versatile product that's made for the outdoors.



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# BT-50 FOR THE SUMMER

**THERE'S PLENTY PLANNED FOR 4X4 AUSTRALIA'S NEW LONG-TERMER OVER THE SUMMER BREAK. BUT FIRST WE NEED TO GET SOME DIRT AND GRIME BENEATH THOSE BFG ALL-TERRAINS.**

It's been a long spell since we last ran a long-term tester out of 4X4 Australia's HQ, so we were pretty chuffed to add this 'new' Mazda BT-50 to the fleet over summer. We say 'new' because it's the face-lifted 2015 model, but it did have a few kays on it by the time it reached us here. Mazda used it on its launch program then shipped it to Coober Pedy, where Crafty flogged it around the desert for a few days (see page 84).

Knowing this car was coming to us, Mazda used it to showcase the extensive range of factory accessories it now offers. It was fitted with an aluminium bullbar, an intake snorkel, a tub mat, floor mats, a dual battery kit, an Icom UHF radio, a towbar

and wiring, an electric brake controller, and optional alloy wheels. The options crank the price up to more than \$63,000, so you could say it's fully loaded. The \$12,000 in extras proves vehicle manufacturers are keen to skim some action away from the aftermarket accessories companies.

About the only things Mazda doesn't offer, and you might want to fit them for outback travel, are a suspension upgrade and heavy-duty tyres. We're pretty happy with the BT-50's factory suspension tune, and we quickly fitted a set of BF Goodrich KO2 All Terrains. We've been keen to sample the new BFG ATs since they launched early this year, and now we finally have a ride to trial them on.

Really impressive are the Australian-developed-and-made products Mazda is offering as factory options. The controller for the dual battery system comes from Redarc, while the driving lights are Lightforce beauties. The factory sat-nav system even has HEMA mapping and OziExplorer loaded on to it, so all bush-track maps are available in the dash.

It's not Australian, but the Icom radio that's neatly mounted to the console is another well-respected product and, again, it's great to see Mazda supplying these recognised brands.

So far it's been all highway kays for the Mazda, but we'll be hitting the dirt and beaches over summer. It has been up

the Hume Highway and back and we love the lazy way the five-cylinder diesel engine lopes along the highway, with plenty of grunt to keep the six-speed automatic transmission happy in top gear all day. This, combined with the big-cab feel of the BT, makes it a sweet highway tourer.

Initial impressions of the BFGs are good, too. They are very quiet for an aggressive AT tyre, but they are still very new. They do show their limits when pushed hard on sealed roads – the deeper-tread blocks, with their square shoulders, protest at being asked to perform like sports car tyres.

We're sure they will be more at home in the dust, gravel and rough stuff. 🚗

WORDS MATT RAUDONIKIS

## ACCESSORIES

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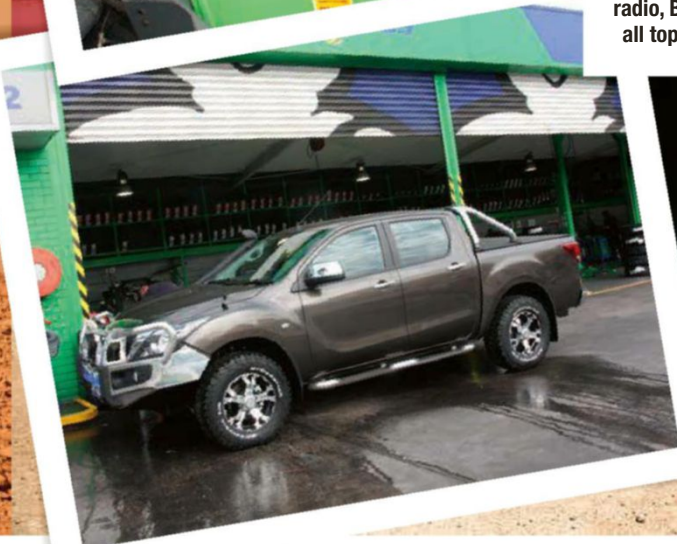
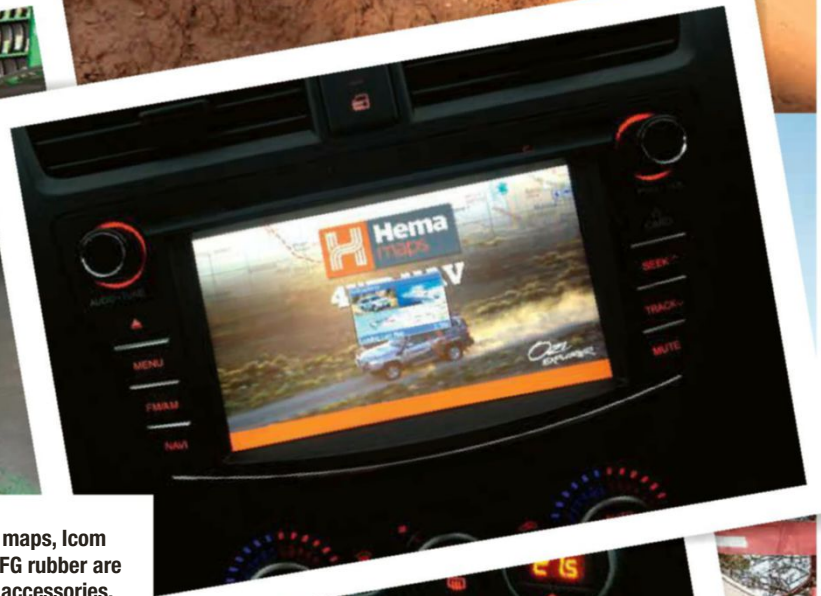




The \$12,000 in extras proves vehicle manufacturers are keen to skim some action away from the aftermarket companies



Hema maps, Icom radio, BFG rubber are all top accessories.







## 4x4 SHED

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# Send in the troops

**YOU DON'T NEED TO 'UPGRADE' TO A SOFT-ROADER JUST BECAUSE YOUR FAMILY IS GROWING. MARK ALLEN EXPLAINS HOW HE MODIFIED A TROOPY TO TAKE HIS KIDS OFF-ROAD.**

**F**OR almost 12 months I've been considering whether I should spend more money on my good-old 100 Series Cruiser (a HZJ105R) or ditch it to start with something 'new'. Like most red-blooded, power-hungry fellas, I believe too much power is never enough, and I wanted more squirt than the 1HZ-powered 100 with an aftermarket MTQ turbo and top-mount intercooler could safely offer.

The 100 had twin TJM Pro Lockers; Tough Dog suspension, front and rear; ARB bar work; plus a shopping cart full of expensive accessories. It had been faithful for almost 10 years of outback touring as well as school drop-offs and shopping-centre hauls.

I researched engine swaps to upgrade power and torque, with a 1HD-FTE being my

first option. But the one thing my 100 couldn't offer was comfortable seating for six people. Yep, we have four little kids that seem to be gaining centimetres each night.

So, with much regret, I decided to sell up and dish out for another Troop Carrier. I owned an older model Troopy (also with a 1HZ, an aftermarket turbo and LPG injection). But it was long gone – and, anyway, it had been decked out in the rear for camping, so there wouldn't have been room for the kids. The things we sacrifice for the family, hey!

One thing a (standard) Troopy can't offer is access to the rear via passenger doors – and there's no way I would rely on tilting the front passenger seat forward for four kids to scramble in and out of the car every time.

Oh, and, no, I wasn't going to buy a Defender again. Yep, I owned a Td5 many years ago. Why can't Toyota emulate Land Rover, with four doors and coil springs all 'round to make the perfect 4x4? I know there's the 76 with four doors (and leaf springs at the rear), but it's shorter than a Troopy. I want maximum internal space for the family and all our gear.

I also wasn't interested in the plethora of light-duty SUV-type 4x4s flooding the market; while they could offer more comfort and be jam-packed with high-tech wizardry, they just don't float my boat and they wouldn't handle the rigours of long-term off-roading and towing. I am happy with increased longevity and off-road performance, albeit with the addition of aftermarket accessories.

That's where customisation comes in to play – if you can't buy the perfect vehicle, you modify one, and I figured a Troopy with an extra door on the passenger side (making it a three-door) would be the duck's nuts, giving me a full-sized heavy-duty 4x4.

Having scoured the internet, car yards and auction sites, I finally found a small fleet of ex-ambulance Troop Carriers, complete with a third door installed, and with incredibly low kays being offered.

To cut a long story short, I'm now the proud owner of a 2011 model GXL Troopy (VDJ78R) with an intercooled 4.5-litre V8 turbo-diesel and just 16,400km on the clock! Sure, it only has two seats (driver and front passenger), but my plans to squeeze four soon-to-be young adults into the rear can now be tested.

WORDS AND PHOTOS MARK ALLEN

Never thought a Troopy was small - until it pulled up next to my old 100, that is.







The third door swings on factory Cruiser hinges, has OE inner and outer door handles, and has the remote central locking wired in.

Engine performance upgrades are on the short list.

The Troopy came with a plastic SmartBar fitted with an X9 electric winch and Night Stalker driving lights; white, steel rims with 265/70R16 Goodyear AT rubber; plus about 50 holes in the rear to plug up, as well as half a dozen in the dash.

Whatever the ambos had in the rear required a lot of holes, so my first step was to spend a few bucks on rubber grommets. As far as the dash holes go, I reckon I'll be able to fill them over time, so they'll be left as is.

My GXL Troopy just scraped in to have twin front air bags but missed out on ABS and factory front and rear lockers fitted as standard – bummer!

The Troopy is mechanically excellent and feels as tight as it was in the showroom, and so it should with only 15,010km on the clock when I bought

it. The body is free of rust and the only panel blemishes are on the turret where the ambos had bars, lights and sirens fitted. I'm not overly concerned, because you can't see them unless you climb up on a ladder and, besides, I'll be fitting some sort of full-length roof rack over it all.

I am nervous about this high-tech diesel, though; I've peddled around a 1HZ for about 15 years (in two different Cruisers) and have not had to worry about electronic wizardry or dirty fuel problems. I know you need to keep these old dinosaur engines clean, so I'll have to be much more vigilant about internal cleanliness with this new engine, so aftermarket fuel and water filtering will be high on my 'must-have' list.

Speaking of lists, I have two: the 'must-have' and the 'would-like'. And while some tasks may fit in both camps, I

can't wait to start fiddling and personalising the Troopy to put my mark on it.

Even though the Troopy has a nice 4.5-litre V8 diesel, it's still pretty gutless compared to some of the leading small-capacity, high-tech diesels of today. I've towed with V8 Cruisers a fair bit over the years and, while the 200 Series is one of the best tow vehicles on the market, the single-turbo 70 Series really drops the ball when it comes to highway-speed tow ability.

I'm not sure which list I should put 'upgrading the power outputs' on but, like I said before, too much power is never enough, so a power upgrade will be high on either list, regardless.

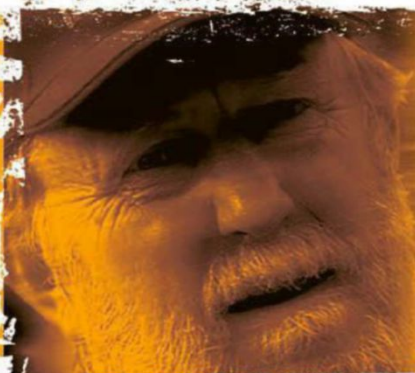
Having lived with the new bus for 1390km, I'm finding it hard to remember to wind up the (electric) windows before killing the engine – the 100 had manual winders. Why don't we get a 10-second grace period before power is totally cut out?

Chugging around town in traffic is easy; sitting on 100 to 110 is a breeze. It does, however, rev too high with that fifth cog gearing. Also, towing a two-tonne trailer north of Sydney is painful compared to towing in my old 100 with its 60 per cent extra go-power under the bonnet.

Yep, the old modified six-pot was better at towing than the stock V8, but that'll change! The Troopy's manual gearbox is great – for a heavy-duty 4x4. It's not too truck-like and not too sissy, and the high seating position is perfect for parking in the narrow school carpark, as long as you've got plenty of space to turn – the turning circle is like that of an ocean liner!

Another Toyota anomaly that I'll spend plenty of time mulling over is the rear track width discrepancy compared to the front. It is 95mm narrower in the rear, so it's far from ideal. I still find it hard to understand why Toyota allowed that to happen. 🐘





# FOOTLOOSE

RON MOON

## SOME THIRD WORLD COUNTRIES HAVE BETTER MOBILE PHONE RECEPTION THAN OUTBACK AUSTRALIA. THAT'S SIMPLY NOT GOOD ENOUGH!

I was coming down the Oodnadatta Track the other day, dropping in to outback towns including Finke in the Northern Territory, and Oodnadatta, William Creek and Marree in South Australia. It was bloody hot and there were very few travellers on the road, so each town was a welcome stop in the heat-soaked landscape.

Not one of these small but important towns – that service a vast and remote inland area – had mobile phone reception! Well, Oodnadatta has a short-range Optus service, I've been told, but that is all. That's bloody disgusting in this day and age in a modern country such as ours!

Meanwhile, when passing through countries including Kenya and Mongolia, we found much better and wider mobile phone coverage. For me, that was a revelation of how badly our telcos (and our governments) treat outback Australia and its people.

While some of those iconic Aussie towns and communities may have some form of internet connection, most of the time it is unavailable to the travelling public. In Marree, an internet connection was available at the local pub for public use, but the town has been forced to stop it because of the poor (slow or near non-existent) connection provided by the

much-talked-about National Broadband Network (NBN). That is piss poor!

All is not lost, however. Supposedly, the mobile phone network will get a big upgrade over the next couple of years, with the Federal and State governments teaming up with Telstra and Vodafone in a \$385 million program to bring mobile services to far-flung places. Note that Optus did not get any of the monetary pie, even though they did apply for some.

In total there will be 144 new and upgraded base stations built across New South Wales, 110 in Victoria, 68 in Queensland, 130 in Western Australia, 11 in South Australia, 31 in Tasmania and five in the Northern Territory.

These bases include Gooloogong in NSW, Dingo in Qld, Cape Otway in Vic and the Aboriginal communities of Imanpa in the NT and Fregon in SA. There was no reference to important tourist towns such as those mentioned on the Oodnadatta Track or elsewhere across the country, but they could be lucky ... we'll see!

These new and upgraded base stations from Telstra and Vodafone will supposedly provide improved mobile reception and coverage to 68,600km<sup>2</sup> and new external antenna coverage to more than 150,000km<sup>2</sup>. More than 5700km of major transport routes will also receive new

handheld or external antenna coverage.

By all accounts both Telstra and Vodafone will determine the rollout sequence of the new and improved bases, while the feds said they will closely monitor the upgrades and ensure that regular public updates are provided.

The first new base station was to be completed by the end of 2015, but have we seen any updates on that? And have we seen any progress with the NBN and its supposed 'future proofing' of all of Australia?

Ask any bush person and most would agree that it's a cruel joke. Download limits are, where they exist, tiny – and connection is so slow that even sending a basic email is often impossible. The publican at Marree, who wanted to upload pics to a tourist-popular website, had to drive to Port Augusta, 380km away, to get a connection good enough for the job!

After all that and the billions of dollars spent, I wouldn't be relying on my mobile phone to get me out of trouble when I'm stuck in the outback. And if you have a mobile phone provider other than Telstra, best of luck getting coverage anywhere in the outback.

I'll continue to pack my sat phone or my HF radio, thanks – and I suggest you do something similar! 📶

More Footloose at:  
[www.guidebooks.com.au/footloose.htm](http://www.guidebooks.com.au/footloose.htm)

After all the billions of dollars spent, I wouldn't be relying on my mobile phone to get me out of trouble when I'm stuck in the outback



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# BULLDUST

DEAN MELLOR

**MOST MOTORING ENTHUSIASTS HAVE AT LEAST A FEW CARS THEY MUST DRIVE BEFORE THEY CARK IT. DEANO CROSSES ONE OFF THE TOP OF HIS BUCKET LIST WHEN HE DRIVES A LAND ROVER DEFENDER 90 HERITAGE.**

I can hardly contain myself; I just caught the train to Sydney to pick up a Land Rover Defender 90 Heritage, which is currently waiting in my driveway for a long drive in the bush, although I am under strict instructions not to damage it in any way ... in any way! Not even bush pinstripes are allowed.

Despite the limitations put on my test drive, I'm so excited by the prospect of driving this little green beastie that even the pissed, drug-affected moron on the Sydney-bound train – who proposed to an equally drug-riddled biddy and outlined his unobtainable plan for a future together in a quaint shack on an acre block – couldn't dampen my enthusiasm.

Prolonging the delay to drive the vehicle that has been my desktop picture for the past 12 months was also a 10-minute wait at the Land Rover dealer in Concord, located on the banks of the picturesque and tranquil Parramatta Road. Lucky for me they have a comfy white leather couch. Unlucky for me the reading material at the dealership is aimed more at the Range Rover buyer than the Defender enthusiast. Nevertheless, flicking through *Gourmet Traveller* I learnt how to roast the perfect Chrissie turkey and then had the opportunity to purvey spectacular images of restaurants I will likely never be able to afford to eat at.

Just as I picked up a copy of *Men's*

*Health* to learn how I could transform my natural beer-drinker's physique into a try-hard six-pack bod, the amicable Don from Concord Land Rover rescued me from a potential lifetime of agony in the gym by ushering me into his office, where he asked for my driver's licence. Like renting a car from Avis, this is standard procedure when picking up any press vehicle. Except this time, he checked my licence details extra closely, just in case I was tempted to not return the pristine and very limited edition Defender.

Paperwork sorted, we descended to the basement carpark where the Defender stood tall, surrounded by modern, swoopy Land Rovers with names like Sport and Evoque. Even in the dim light of the carpark, it was easy to see that this was no ordinary Defender. Other than the unique Heritage-style grille, colour-matched steel rims and special HUE 166 logos that pay homage to the original Land Rover, this example had deep, lustrous paint with just a hint of metallic.

After completing the obligatory 360-degree walk-around, I pointed the key-fob at the Landy and unlocked the doors ... remotely! Despite this surprising touch of modernity, familiarity returned when I approached the door and pressed the button to open it. And although the interior was decked out in fancy Almond cloth seat trim, with special Heritage stitching and a leather-clad steering

wheel, the oft-complained-about driving position remained.

Personally, I like the Defender's driving position. Sure, it's only really comfortable when the window is down so you can rest your right arm on the sill, but the high seat gives the Defender driver a commanding view out the upright windows, and forward vision over the stubby little bonnet is unequalled in today's world of wind-tunnel-designed four-wheel drives.

As I eyed the ceiling of the carpark, Don assured me that the Defender had plenty of clearance, and then he bid me farewell. I fired up the little 2.2-litre diesel donk, selected first and eased out the clutch. It took a couple of goes to make the sharp left turn out of the Defender's tight parking spot; it may have a short 2360mm wheelbase, but it still has a massive 13.4m turning circle. Sure, this is less than convenient in the city, but in the Defender's natural habitat, out in the scrub, it's hardly an issue.

So far I've only driven the D90 Heritage about 100km on the road, straight back to my joint, but soon I'm going on a 'proper' drive. I already love it and I'm already trying to figure out how to raise the funds to buy one. Perhaps I could *accidentally* scratch this one and pick it up for a song? Nah, I could never do that to such a beautiful Landy ... and, after all, I'm under strict instructions. 🚗





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# TIGHT LINES

STEVE STARLING

## HIRING A FOUR-WHEEL DRIVE MIGHTN'T BE IDEAL. BUT WHEN YOU'VE FLOWN SOMEWHERE FOR A HOLIDAY, ANY 4X4 IS BETTER THAN NO 4X4 – JUST MAKE SURE YOU READ THE FINE PRINT.

There's an old joke about hire cars being able to go places no other vehicle can reach. It's a tongue-in-cheek reference to the fact that some hirers are more likely to flog and mistreat a vehicle they don't own. In reality, those of us who have spent a fair amount of time at the wheels of hired cars know that the fine print in most rental contracts frowns upon such behaviour, and typically backs up its terse written warnings with potentially hefty additional fees and charges.

Ironically, many of the larger companies that hire out four-wheel drive vehicles specify in those rental agreements that their rigs are not to be driven off-road – at all! Some even preclude their use on unsealed dirt roads. It makes you wonder.

As a regular visitor to New Zealand, I spent a long time tracking down a Kiwi business that rented 4x4s that I was allowed (even encouraged) to get down and dirty with. I enjoyed several great years as a customer of a Christchurch-based outfit, but, sadly, the business eventually closed its doors when its affable proprietor moved across the ditch to Oz and joined the burgeoning 4x4 tag-along tour industry. I


sure do miss the unique service!

Of course, a lot of 'proper' off-roaders no doubt look down their noses at the notion of hiring a 4x4. The same is true of serious anglers when it comes to the subject of hiring boats. There's nothing quite like your own tweaked and customised set-up. But the fact remains that we sometimes find ourselves in a position where we're unable to make use of our own vehicles and watercraft, typically because we've flown to a particular destination. At such times, hiring may be the only viable option.

As a case in point, on a recent visit to Tasmania, my wife Jo and I took advantage of a wonderful new hire outfit intended to service the island state's significant FIFO (fly-in, fly-out) recreational fishing market. Clinton Howe is a tackle shop proprietor based in Ulverstone, on the north coast of the Apple Isle. Operating simply as Tassie Boat Hire, Clinton offers a fully kitted-out 420 Quintrex Renegade side-console tinnie with a 40hp outboard, bow-mounted electric motor, depth sounder, marine radio and all the other important 'fruit' demanded by high-end sport fishers. This rig is more than capable of tackling

anything from highland lake trouting to estuary bream work, or even near-shore coastal action, in the right weather.

Better still, Clinton also offers a 2011 Mitsubishi Triton 2.5-litre turbo-diesel, twin-cab ute with an auto transmission, as a tow vehicle, to complete the turn-key package. We used this full rig for a week of high-country trout fishing and were absolutely delighted with the package, not to mention Clinton's pick-up and drop-off service at the airport! For less than \$350 per day, all-up (boat, ute and airport transfers), it was excellent value, particularly when compared with the cost of getting your own vehicle and boat across Bass Strait and back for a short-term visit.

Not surprisingly, Clinton's first 4x4 and boat hire rig is already heavily booked, especially for the busy summer/autumn period, and he has recently put a matching set-up on the road. I reckon he's on to a winner and may eventually need a third package. If you'd like to find out more about this interesting option, have a look at Clinton's Tassie Boat Hire page on Facebook, or visit his website at: [tassieboathire.com.au](http://tassieboathire.com.au) 

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VIV MOON

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### A MAN'S JAFFLE

#### INGREDIENTS

For each jaffle you'll need:

- 2 slices of bread
- A little butter
- 1 slice of cheese
- 1 to 2 tbs baked beans – drained (whatever flavour you want)
- 1 slice of ham

#### COOKING IT

**Preparation time: 5 minutes**

Cooking time: 3 to 5 minutes for each side (timing will depend on the heat from your coals).

Preheat your jaffle. Lightly spread each bread slice with a little butter. Place the bread buttered-side down into the jaffle iron. Spoon in the baked beans and spread out evenly, but don't go all the way to the sides! Add the ham and cheese.

Top with the remaining bread slice, butter-side up.

Cook for a few minutes on each side until golden brown.

While the jaffles are still in the irons, cut off any burnt edges.

Cool slightly before eating so you don't burn the inside of your mouth.

Best to drain the baked beans if the mixture has a lot of liquid.

### APPLE JAFFLE

#### INGREDIENTS

\*Quantities are just a guide; you may like to use more or less

2 slices of bread

A little butter

1 to 2 tsps of cream cheese (amount depends on how thick you want it on the bread)

Apple slices cut thinly – you'll need about a 1/3 of a medium apple for each jaffle (or use canned apple slices)

A pinch of ground cinnamon (optional) – if you use it sparingly it adds a lovely flavour to the apple

1 tsp of maple syrup (more or less to taste)

1 tbs of dried cranberries

½ to 1 tbs of roasted chopped walnuts/pecans or toasted slivered almonds

#### COOKING IT

**Preparation time: 5 minutes**

Cooking time: 3 to 5 minutes for each side (timing will depend on the heat from your coals).

Preheat your jaffle. Lightly spread each bread slice with a little butter.

Place the bread buttered-side down into the jaffle iron. Spread the bread with a little cream cheese, then add the apple slices and spread out evenly, but don't go all the way to the sides!

Sprinkle a little ground cinnamon over the apple slices and then pour over a little maple syrup. Finish with a sprinkling of dried cranberries and nuts. Top with the remaining bread slice, butter-side up. Cook for a few minutes on each side until golden brown. While the jaffles are still in the irons, cut off any burnt edges.

Cool slightly before eating so you don't burn the inside of your mouth.

#### VIV'S HINTS

You need to cut the apple slices thinly or they won't soften quickly enough in the short cooking time. Also try using fruit loaf slices instead of white or brown bread. Use sultanas instead of dried cranberries. Use honey instead of maple syrup. You can also serve them with a dollop of vanilla yoghurt or cream on the side.

#### A FEW JAFFLE IRON TIPS

Let the fire burn down to coals. Pre-heat jaffle iron. Flip it regularly.

For more great recipes: check out Ron & Viv Moon's website at [www.guidebooks.com.au](http://www.guidebooks.com.au)

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**RANGER**  
Australian-designed, Thai-built Ranger has quickly earned big off-road rep. Turbo-diesel 2.2 four and 3.2-litre five feature in 4x4 models. The dual-cab XLT is the big seller for recreational off-roaders.

	PRICE	ENGINE	TRANS	TORQUE	POWER	WEIGHT	LOAD	TOWING	FUEL	LAST TESTED
Single XL c/chass	38,390	L4TD/2.2	M6	375	110	1762	1438	3500	80	
Single XL c/c	40,890	L5TD/3.2	M6	470	147	1795	1405	3500	80	
Single XL c/c	42,890	L5TD/3.2	A6	470	147	1795	1405	3500	80	
Super XL c/c	43,390	L5TD/3.2	M6	470	147	1870	1330	3500	80	
Super XL p/u	44,390	L5TD/3.2	M6	470	110	2018	1182	3500	80	
Super XLT p/u	51,890	L5TD/3.2	M6	470	147	2118	1082	3500	80	
Super XLT p/u	53,890	L5TD/3.2	A6	470	147	2118	1082	3500	80	
Dual XL c/c	42,890	L4TD/2.2	M6	375	110	1909	1291	3500	80	
Dual XL c/c	44,890	L4TD/2.2	A6	375	110	1909	1291	3500	80	
Dual XL c/c	45,390	L5TD/3.2	M6	470	147	1938	1262	3500	80	
Dual XL c/c	47,390	L5TD/3.2	A6	470	147	1938	1262	3500	80	
Dual XL p/u	43,890	L4TD/2.2	M6	375	110	2034	1166	3500	80	
Dual XL p/u	45,890	L4TD/2.2	A6	375	110	2034	1166	3500	80	
Dual XL p/u	46,390	L5TD/3.2	M6	470	147	2068	1132	3500	80	
Dual XL p/u	48,390	L5TD/3.2	A6	470	147	2068	1132	3500	80	
Dual XLS p/u	48,090	L5TD/3.2	M6	470	147	2064	1136	3500	80	
Dual XLT p/u	53,890	L5TD/3.2	M6	470	147	2159	1041	3500	80	Jan 12
Dual XLT p/u	55,890	L5TD/3.2	A6	470	147	2159	1041	3500	80	July 12
Dual Wildtrak	57,390	L5TD/3.2	M6	470	147	2200	1000	3500	80	
Dual Wildtrak	59,390	L5TD/3.2	A6	470	147	2200	1000	3500	80	
Single XL + c/c	46,280	L5TD/3.2	A6	470	147	1795	1405	3500	80	
Dual XL+ c/c	51,760	L5TD/3.2	A6	470	147	1938	1262	3500	80	
Dual XL+ p/u	52,760	L5TD/3.2	A6	470	147	2068	1132	3500	80	

**EVEREST**  
Ranger-based seven-seater has arrived with three models on offer.

	PRICE	ENGINE	TRANS	TORQUE	POWER	WEIGHT	LOAD	TOWING	FUEL	LAST TESTED
Ambiente	54,990	L5TD/3.2	A6	470	147	2370	730	3000	80	
Trend	60,990	L5TD/3.2	A6	470	147	2407	693	3000	80	
Titanium	76,990	L5TD/3.2	A6	470	147	2495	605	3000	80	

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**TUNLAND**  
Foton is a Chinese manufacturer responsible for the Tunland Utes. Single cab and dual cabs available in no-nonsense single-trim specification and powered by Cummins turbo-diesel.

	PRICE	ENGINE	TRANS	TORQUE	POWER	WEIGHT	LOAD	TOWING	FUEL	LAST TESTED
Single Cab Ute	25,990*	L4TD/2.8	M5	360	120	1879	1015	2500	76	
Dual Cab Ute	30,990*	L4TD/2.8	M5	360	120	1950	1025	2500	76	

\*This is a nationwide drive-away price, not a list price, and includes on-roads

**GREAT WALL** 3-year/100,000km [www.greatwallmotors.com.au](http://www.greatwallmotors.com.au)  
**V240/X240**  
Chinese-made Great Wall Motors asks a budget price for basic specs. No longer being imported to Australia, so those in dealers are older stock.

	PRICE	ENGINE	TRANS	TORQUE	POWER	WEIGHT	LOAD	TOWING	FUEL	LAST TESTED
Single V240	21,990	L4/2.4	M5	200	100	1507	1178	1700	70	
Dual V240	25,990	L4/2.4	M5	200	100	1780	1050	2000	70	
Single V200	23,990	L4/2.0	M6	310	105	1707	1178	1700	70	
Dual V200	27,990	L4/2.0	M6	310	105	1835	1050	2000	70	
X200	27,990	L4TD/2.0	M6	310	105	1890	660	2000	70	
X200	30,990	L4TD/2.0	A5	310	105	1890	660	2000	70	

\*This is a nationwide drive-away price, not a list price, and includes on-roads

**HAVAL** 3-year/100,000km [www.haval.com.au](http://www.haval.com.au)  
**H9**  
Chinese-made Haval is a fresh arrival on the Australian market.

	PRICE	ENGINE	TRANS	TORQUE	POWER	WEIGHT	LOAD	TOWING	FUEL	LAST TESTED
H9 Premium	46,490	L4/2.0	A6	324	160	2250	645	2500	85	
H9 Lux	50,990	L4/2.0	A6	324	160	2250	645	2500	85	

**HOLDEN** 3-year/100,000km [www.holden.com.au](http://www.holden.com.au)  
**COLORADO**  
Holden's Thai-made Colorado is an impressive design that has a 2.8-litre engine that punches above its capacity and has a class-equal tow rating.

	PRICE	ENGINE	TRANS	TORQUE	POWER	WEIGHT	LOAD	TOWING	FUEL	LAST TESTED
DX Single c/c	35,990	L4TD/2.8	M5	440	132	1957	1143	3500	76	
LS Single c/c	36,990	L4TD/2.8	M5	440	132	1962	1138	3500	76	
LS Single c/c	38,990	L4TD/2.8	A6	470	132	1959	1141	3500	76	
LS Space c/c	41,450	L4TD/2.8	M5	440	132	2048	1052	3500	76	
LS Space c/c	43,150	L4TD/2.8	A6	470	132	2045	1055	3500	76	
LTZ Space p/u	47,990	L4TD/2.8	M5	440	132	2034	1066	3500	76	
LTZ Space p/u	49,990	L4TD/2.8	A6	470	132	2031	1069	3500	76	
LS Crew c/c	43,490	L4TD/2.8	M5	440	132	2033	1067	3500	76	
LS Crew c/c	45,490	L4TD/2.8	A6	470	132	2030	1070	3500	76	
LS Crew p/u	43,990	L4TD/2.8	M5	440	132	2019	1081	3500	76	July 12
LS Crew p/u	45,990	L4TD/2.8	A6	470	132	2016	1084	3500	76	July 12
LT Crew p/u	46,490	L4TD/2.8	M5	440	132	2007	1093	3500	76	July 12
LT Crew p/u	48,490	L4TD/2.8	A6	470	132	2004	1096	3500	76	July 12
LTZ Crew p/u	50,990	L4TD/2.8	M5	440	132	2056	1044	3500	76	Aug 12
LTZ Crew p/u	53,190	L4TD/2.8	A6	470	132	2053	1047	3500	76	Aug 12
Z71 Crew p/u	54,990	L4TD/2.8	M5	440	132	2056	1044	3500	76	
Z71 Crew p/u	57,190	L4TD/2.8	A6	470	132	2053	1047	3500	76	

**COLORADO 7**  
Seven-seat wagon based on its Colorado sibling. It has the same Duramax powerplant but is auto-only. Seven pews may make it a family favourite, but touring use is limited to five.

	PRICE	ENGINE	TRANS	TORQUE	POWER	WEIGHT	LOAD	TOWING	FUEL	LAST TESTED
LT	\$47,990	L4TD/2.8	A6	470	132	2072	678	3000	76	
LTZ	\$51,490	L4TD/2.8	A6	470	132	2117	633	3000	76	Feb 13

**INFINITI** 4-year/100,000km [www.infiniticars.com.au](http://www.infiniticars.com.au)  
**QX80**  
Nissan luxury brand's bold-looking, tech-laden version of the Y62 Patrol. Like Y62, no diesel offered.

	PRICE	ENGINE	TRANS	TORQUE	POWER	WEIGHT	LOAD	TOWING	FUEL	LAST TESTED
QX80	\$110,000	V8/5.6	A7	560	298	2666	794	3500	140	

**ISUZU** 5-year/130,000km [www.isuzuute.com.au](http://www.isuzuute.com.au)  
**D-MAX**  
D-Max shares body architecture with Holden Colorado. Powered by Isuzu's respected 3.0-litre TD. Five-speed manual and five-speed auto.

	PRICE	ENGINE	TRANS	TORQUE	POWER	WEIGHT	LOAD	TOWING	FUEL	LAST TESTED
Single EX c/c	\$33,900	L4TD/3.0	M5	380	130	1657	1293	3500	76	
Single SX c/c	\$36,900	L4TD/3.0	M5	380	130	1660	1290	3500	76	
Single SX c/c	\$39,100	L4TD/3.0	A5	380	130	1665	1295	3500	76	
SX Space c/c	\$39,600	L4TD/3.0	M5	380	130	1741	1209	3500	76	
SX Space c/c	\$41,800	L4TD/3.0	A5	380	130	1746	1214	3500	76	
LS-U Space p/u	\$44,000	L4TD/3.0	M5	380	130	1900	1050	3500	76	
LS-U Space p/u	\$46,400	L4TD/3.0	A5	380	130	1905	1055	3500	76	
SX Crew c/c	\$42,100	L4TD/3.0	M5	380	130	1795	1155	3500	76	
SX Crew c/c	\$44,300	L4TD/3.0	A5	380	130	1780	1160	3500	76	
SX Crew p/u	\$42,800	L4TD/3.0	M5	380	130	1915	1035	3500	76	
SX Crew p/u	\$45,000	L4TD/3.0	A5	380	130	1920	1040	3500	76	
Dual LS-M p/u	\$44,900	L4TD/3.0	M5	380	130	1990	1060	3500	76	
Dual LS-M p/u	\$47,100	L4TD/3.0	A5	380	130	1995	1065	3000	76	
Dual LS-U p/u	\$46,100	L4TD/3.0	M5	380	130	1935	1015	3000	76	
Dual LS-Terrain p/u	\$50,800	L4TD/3.0	A5	380	130	1940	1020	3000	76	

**MU-X**  
Isuzu's seven-seat wagon based on the D-Max ute underpinnings but with a smooth-riding coil spring rear suspension. Uses Isuzu's own respected 3.0-litre TD engine.

	PRICE	ENGINE	TRANS	TORQUE	POWER	WEIGHT	LOAD	TOWING	FUEL	LAST TESTED
3.0 LS-M	\$45,600	L4TD/3.0	M5	380	130	2075	675	3000	76	
3.0 LS-U	\$47,100	L4TD/3.0	M5	380	130	2075	675	3000	76	
3.0 LS-T	\$54,000	L4TD/3.0	A5	380	130	2075	675	3000	76	Feb 2014



<b>JEEP</b> 3-year/100,000km <a href="http://www.jeep.com.au">www.jeep.com.au</a>										
<b>WRANGLER</b>										
Two doors or four, petrol V6 or TD4, auto or manual – Wrangler has all the options, although range has been cut recently. 3.6-litre V6 is a leap forward from the 3.8 and has an optional five-speed auto.										
	PRICE	ENGINE	TRANS	TORQUE	POWER	WEIGHT	LOAD	TOWING	FUEL	LAST TESTED
Sport soft-top	34,000	V6/3.6	M6	347	209	1745	455	1600	70.4	
Sport soft-top	36,000	V6/3.6	A5	347	209	1825	365	1600	70.4	
Overland soft-top	45,000	V6/3.6	A5	347	209	1919	n/a	1000	70	
Unlimited Sport	38,000	V6/3.6	M6	347	209	1875	450	2300	85.2	
Unlimited Sport	40,000	V6/3.6	A5	347	209	2055	370	2300	85.2	April 13
Unlimited Sport	46,000	L4TD/2.8	A5	460	130	2105	345	2300	85.2	
Unlimited Overland	49,000	V6/3.6	A5	347	209	2053	n/a	2000	85	
Unlimited Rubicon	51,000	V6/3.6	A5	347	209	1975	395	2300	85.2	

<b>CHEROKEE</b>										
The new KL Cherokee is the fourth generation of the series and has only two dual-transfer models available: the Trailhawk and Limited Diesel.										
	PRICE	ENGINE	TRANS	TORQUE	POWER	WEIGHT	LOAD	TOWING	FUEL	LAST TESTED
Trailhawk	47,500	V6/3.2	A9	316	200	1862	633	2200	60	Sept 14
Limited Diesel	49,000	L4/2.0	A9	350	125	1854	641	2393	60	

<b>GRAND CHEROKEE</b>										
Jeep's Grand Cherokee runs a grumpy Pentastar V6, efficient 3.0TD V6, or the Hemi V8. Quadra-lift air suspension for Limited and Overland, rather than coils. Five seats and tight luggage area.										
	PRICE	ENGINE	TRANS	TORQUE	POWER	WEIGHT	LOAD	TOWING	FUEL	LAST TESTED
Laredo	48,500	V6/3.6	A8	347	210	2084	758	2812	93.5	
Laredo TDV6	54,500	V6/3.0TD	A8	550	177	2267	677	3500	93.1	
Limited	58,000	V6/3.6	A8	347	210	2169	758	2812	93.5	
Limited TDV6	64,000	V6/3.0TD	A8	550	177	2281	677	3500	93.1	
Limited HEMI V8	64,000	V8/5.7	A8	500	240	2302	642	3500	93.5	
Overland	68,000	V6/3.6	A8	347	210	2279	670	3500	93.5	
Overland HEMI V8	74,000	V8/5.7	A8	520	259	2329	642	3500	93.5	
Overland TDV6	74,000	V6/3.0TD	A8	550	177	2327	677	3500	93.1	
Summit Platinum	79,000	V6/3.0TD	A8	550	177	2327	677	3500	93.1	

<b>JMC</b> 3-year/130,000km <a href="http://www.jmcmotor.com.au">www.jmcmotor.com.au</a>										
<b>VIGUS</b>										
A low-priced Chinese ute imported and distributed by the local arm of JMC and using proprietary powertrain components from the likes of Mitsubishi and Getrag.										
	PRICE	ENGINE	TRANS	TORQUE	POWER	WEIGHT	LOAD	TOWING	FUEL	LAST TESTED
Vigus LX	24,990	L4/2.4	M5	201	100	1805	890	2000	74	
Vigus LX	27,990	L4TD/2.4	M5	290	90	1947	823	2000	68	
Vigus SLX	30,990	L4TD/2.4	M5	290	90	1947	823	2000	68	

<b>LAND ROVER</b> 3-year/100,000km <a href="http://www.landrover.com.au">www.landrover.com.au</a>										
<b>DISCOVERY 4</b>										
The Discovery 4 has versatile seating. Sophisticated chassis electronics and effective all-independent suspension provide formidable off-road go.										
	PRICE	ENGINE	TRANS	TORQUE	POWER	WEIGHT	LOAD	TOWING	FUEL	LAST TESTED
TDV6	69,330	V6TD/3.0	A6	520	155	2583	657	3500	82	April 13
SE SDV6	84,430	V6SD/3.0	A6	600	180	2583	657	3500	82	July 13
SE SCV6	84,430	V6SC/3.0	A8	450	250	2565	675	3500	86	Sept 14
HSE SDV6	95,730	V6SD/3.0	A6	600	180	2583	657	3500	82	Nov 10
HSE SCV6	95,730	V6SD/3.0	A8	450	250	2565	675	3500	86	

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## BY THE NUMBERS

20 top-selling 4x4s in November 2015

Source: VFACTS

	VEHICLE	UNITS
1	Toyota Hilux	2531
2	Ford Ranger	2437
3	Nissan Navara	1857
4	Holden Colorado	1462
5	Toyota Prado	1257
6	Mitsubishi Triton	1071
7	Isuzu D-MAX	981
8	Toyota Land Cruiser Wagon	938
9	Jeep Grand Cherokee	902
10	Mitsubishi Pajero	672
11	Mazda BT-50	670
12	Volkswagen Amarok	556
13	Isuzu MU-X	543
14	Toyota Land Cruiser PU/CC	491
15	Toyota Fortuner	448
16	Ford Everest	334
17	Land Rover Discovery	288
18	Holden Colorado 7	283
19	Range Rover Sport	279
20	Mitsubishi Challenger	203

10 top-selling 4x4s, year-to-date in 2015 (November 2015)

	VEHICLE	UNITS
1	Toyota Hilux	23,611
2	Ford Ranger	21,119
3	Mitsubishi Triton	19,009
4	Holden Colorado	14,561
5	Toyota Prado	13,887
6	Nissan Navara	11,555
7	Jeep Grand Cherokee	11,217
8	Isuzu D-MAX	10,231
9	Toyota Land Cruiser Wagon	8379
10	Mazda BT-50	8050





## TRITON'S ITALIAN JOB

THIS is Fiat's take on the Mitsubishi Triton Ute, and it's called the Fullback. Basically, it's a rebadged MQ Triton with the same 2.4L diesel engine and the choice of auto or manual gearboxes. Only the double-cab 4x4 Fullback was shown at the unveiling in Dubai last month.

Fiat Chrysler Automobiles (FCA) has said the Fullback will be for international markets, but there has been no confirmation if and when it will come to Australia. If it does, it will join the likes of the Toyota Hilux, Ford Ranger, Holden Colorado and Triton in the hotly contested one-tonne ute segment. The Fullback could be just the vehicle to give FCA a contender in that popular segment, where it currently has none.

The much rumoured Wrangler ute wouldn't go astray, though.



### RANGE ROVER SPORT

New Sport also gets Land Rover's 3.0SDV6 and a revitalised 5.0 V8 and Supercharged V8. The TDV6 is the pick of the range for performance and economy.

	PRICE	ENGINE	TRANS	TORQUE	POWER	WEIGHT	LOAD	TOWING	FUEL	LAST TESTED
V8 HSE Dyn	168,600	V8/5.0	A8	625	375	2310	740	3500	105	
V8 Autobi Dyn	191,900	V8/5.0	A8	625	375	2310	740	3500	105	
SDV6 SE	113,100	V6TD/3.0	A8	700	225	2115	885	3500	80	
SDV6 HSE	130,100	V6TD/3.0	A8	700	225	2115	885	3500	80	
Autodyn Hybrid	174,700	V6TD/3.0	A8	700	260	2372	778	3000	80	
SD V8 HSE	145,700	V8TD/4.4	A8	740	250	2398	930	3500	80	
SDV8 HSE Dyn	153,300	V8TD/4.4	A8	740	250	2398	930	3500	80	



### RANGE ROVER

Land Rover combines supreme luxury and off-road capability in the Range. More power, less weight and better economy are just some of the improvements to the über-roader.

	PRICE	ENGINE	TRANS	TORQUE	POWER	WEIGHT	LOAD	TOWING	FUEL	LAST TESTED
V6 Vogue	190,300	V6/3.0	A8	450	250	2160	840	3500	105	
S/CV8 Autobiog	253,500	V8SC/5.0	A8	625	375	2330	820	3500	105	
Autobiog LWB	265,400	V8SC/5.0	A8	625	375	2330	820	3500	105	
TD Vogue	179,800	V6D/3.0	A8	600	190	2160	840	3500	85	June 13
Vogue LWB	189,100	V6D/3.0	A8	600	190	2360	840	3500	85	
SD Vogue	201,000	V8SD/4.4	A8	740	250	2360	840	3500	105	May 13
SD Vogue SE	223,000	V8SD/4.4	A8	740	250	2360	840	3500	105	
SDV8 Autobiog	240,700	V8SD/4.4	A8	740	250	2360	840	3500	105	
Vogue SE LWB	223,000	V8D/4.4	A8	740	250	2360	840	3500	105	
Autobiog LWB	252,500	V8D/4.4	A8	740	250	2360	840	3500	105	



### DEFENDER (WAGON)

The mighty Defender has impressive payload and go-anywhere capability. Sans seats, the 110 in particular makes a great tourer – after you add a long-range fuel tank.

	PRICE	ENGINE	TRANS	TORQUE	POWER	WEIGHT	LOAD	TOWING	FUEL	LAST TESTED
90	42,800	L4TD/2.2	M6	360	90	1771	734	3500	60	June 12
110	47,500	L4TD/2.2	M6	360	90	1977	1073	3500	75	Aug 08



### DEFENDER (UTES)

The 130 crew-cab option packs allow either traction control and ABS or a heavy-duty suspension and GVM upgrade, but not both packs together. 110 Utes withdrawn from the market in July, 2015.

	PRICE	ENGINE	TRANS	TORQUE	POWER	WEIGHT	LOAD	TOWING	FUEL	LAST TESTED
130 Crew Cab c/c	52,790	L4TD/2.2	M6	360	90	2039	1607	3500	75	Jan 08
130 Crew cab PU	54,290	L4TD/2.2	M6	360	90	2024	1476	3500	75	



## MAHINDRA

3-year/100,000km [www.mahindra.com.au](http://www.mahindra.com.au)

### GENIO

New ute from Mahindra. Just a single cab so far in the 4x4 range but dual cab coming shortly.

	PRICE	ENGINE	TRANS	TORQUE	POWER	WEIGHT	LOAD	TOWING	FUEL	LAST TESTED
Single cab	23,490	2.2td	m5	280	88	1820	1160		74	
Dual cab	26,990	2.2td	M5	280	88	1980	1000		74	



### PIK-UP

Now has standard airbags and ABS, and recently received a new, more powerful engine. Available in single- and dual-cab configuration with or without a tub. Easy!

	PRICE	ENGINE	TRANS	TORQUE	POWER	WEIGHT	LOAD	TOWING	FUEL	LAST TESTED
2.2 single c/c	22,990	L4TD/2.2	M5	290	89	1860	1060	2500	80	
2.2 dual c/c	25,490	L4TD/2.2	M5	290	89	2010	1000	2500	80	
2.2 single p/u	23,990	L4TD/2.2	M5	290	89	2060	1060	2500	80	
2.2 dual p/u	25,990	L4TD/2.2	M5	290	89	2120	1000	2500	80	



## MAZDA

3-year/unlimited km [www.mazda.com.au](http://www.mazda.com.au)

### BT-50

Developed in Australia in tandem with Ford Ranger. Its big attraction is in its sharp pricing. Diff lock and low-range TC work great. 3.2-litre only.

	PRICE	ENGINE	TRANS	TORQUE	POWER	WEIGHT	LOAD	TOWING	FUEL	LAST TESTED
Single Cab XT c/c	36,850	L5TD/3.2	M6	470	147	1789	1411	3500	80	
Freestyle XT c/c	40,815	L5TD/3.2	M6	470	147	1857	1343	3500	80	
Freestyle XTR p/u	47,675	L5TD/3.2	M6	470	147	2037	1163	3500	80	
Dual XT c/c	42,815	L5TD/3.2	M6	470	147	1929	1271	3500	80	
Dual XT p/u	44,615	L5TD/3.2	M6	470	147	2044	1156	3500	80	
Dual XT p/u	47,265	L5TD/3.2	A6	470	147	2061	1139	3500	80	
Dual XTR p/u	49,700	L5TD/3.2	M6	470	147	2086	1114	3500	80	Jan 12
Dual XTR p/u	51,700	L5TD/3.2	A6	470	147	2103	1097	3500	80	
Dual GT p/u	51,790	L5TD/3.2	M6	470	147	2095	1105	3500	80	
Dual GT p/u	53,790	L5TD/3.2	A6	470	147	2112	1088	3500	80	



## MERCEDES

3-year/unlimited km [www.mercedes-benz.com.au](http://www.mercedes-benz.com.au)

### M-CLASS

The M-Class has been revamped but is still usable off-road when optioned with the on and off-road pack, but that has to be selected with the Airmatic pack to receive the air suspension.

	PRICE	ENGINE	TRANS	TORQUE	POWER	WEIGHT	LOAD	TOWING	FUEL	LAST TESTED
ML250 BlueTEC	83,900	L4TD/2.1	A7	500	150	2150	800	3265	93	
ML350 BlueTEC	101,510	V6TD/3.0	A7	620	190	2175	775	3265	93	
ML400	103,510	V6/3.0	A7	480	245	2130	770	3265	70	
ML500	122,510	V8/4.7	A7	600	300	2288	715	3265	93	
ML63 AMG	182,510	V8/5.5	A7	700	386	2345	705	3265	93	



### GL-CLASS

The GL is a bigger version of the M-Class, and upgrades across the range see it out until the new GLE-class arrives in 2016. The V8 pulls like a train.

	PRICE	ENGINE	TRANS	TORQUE	POWER	WEIGHT	LOAD	TOWING	FUEL	LAST TESTED
GL350 Ltd Edition	114,510	V6TD/3.0	A7	620	190	2450	795	3500	112	
GL350 Edition S	134,510	V6TD/3.0	A7	620	190	2450	795	3500	112	
GL500 Edition S	159,510	V8/4.7	A7	700	320	2445	805	3150	93	
GL63 AMG	214,510	V8/5.5	A7	760	410	2580	670	3500	100	

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**G-CLASS**

With triple diff locks, long-travel coil suspension, rugged construction, Merc's Gelandewagen is off-road heritage writ large. Unfortunately, so is the price tag on an updated 30-year-old design.

	PRICE	ENGINE	TRANS	TORQUE	POWER	WEIGHT	LOAD	TOWING	FUEL	LAST TESTED
G350 BlueTEC	150,610	V6TD/3.0	A7	540	155	2570	630	2850	96	Feb 12
G500	167,510	V8/5.5	A7	530	285	2530	670	3175	132	
G63 AMG	233,910	V8/5.5	A7	760	400	2550	n/a	3500	96	

**MITSUBISHI**5-year/130,000km [www.mitsubishi-motors.com.au](http://www.mitsubishi-motors.com.au)**PAJERO**

With all-independent suspension, Pajero has class-leading on-road handling. Effective traction control and rear diff lock make it very handy off-road, too. Sharp base price makes it a great all-rounder.

	PRICE	ENGINE	TRANS	TORQUE	POWER	WEIGHT	LOAD	TOWING	FUEL	LAST TESTED
GLX 3.2	50,990	L4TD/3.2	M5	441	147	2283	740	3000	88	
GLX 3.2	53,990	L4TD/3.2	A5	441	147	2273	750	3000	88	
GLS 3.2	58,990	L4TD/3.2	M5	441	147	2283	740	3000	88	
GLS 3.2	61,990	L4TD/3.2	A5	441	147	2273	750	3000	88	
Exceed 3.2	65,990	L4TD/3.2	A5	441	147	2347	683	3000	88	

**TRITON**

MQ Triton is an evolution rather than a revolution, but has a more torquey and refined engine, better low range and vastly improved fit-and-finish over the superseded MN series.

	PRICE	ENGINE	TRANS	TORQUE	POWER	WEIGHT	LOAD	TOWING	FUEL	LAST TESTED
GLX Sgl Cab/Ch	32,490	L4TD/2.4	M6	430	133	1660	1240	3100	75	
GLX Club Cab/Ch	35,290	L4TD/2.4	M6	430	133	1775	1125	3100	75	Aug 15
GLX Dual Cab	36,990	L4TD/2.4	M6	430	133	1930	970	3100	75	
GLX Dual Cab	39,490	L4TD/2.4	A5	430	133	1930	970	3100	75	
GLS Dual Cab	40,990	L4TD/2.4	M6	430	133	1950	950	3100	75	
GLS Dual Cab	43,490	L4TD/2.4	A5	430	133	1950	950	3100	75	
Exceed Dual Cab	47,490	L4TD/2.4	A5	430	133	1965	935	3100	75	Jun 15

**PAJERO SPORT**

Paj Sport replaces the Challenger in Mitsubishi's 4x4 range. It's still on Triton ute chassis but with rear coils under the back and bespoke bodywork. An 8-speed auto replaces the 5-slot of the ute.

	PRICE	ENGINE	TRANS	TORQUE	POWER	WEIGHT	LOAD	TOWING	FUEL	LAST TESTED
GLX	45,000	L4TD/2.4	A8	430	133	2045	666	3100	68	
GLS	48,500	L4TD/2.4	A8	430	133	2060	660	3100	68	Feb 16
Exceed	52,750	L4TD/2.4	A8	430	133	2070	640	3100	68	

**NISSAN**3-year/100,000km [www.nissan.com.au](http://www.nissan.com.au)**PATROL Y62**

In a segment that drinks diesel, top-spec Patrol is available in V8-petrol guise only. Fully independent suspension is backed by electronic traction aids, but its thirst hinders towing and touring.

	PRICE	ENGINE	TRANS	TORQUE	POWER	WEIGHT	LOAD	TOWING	FUEL	LAST TESTED
Ti	69,990	V8/5.6	A7	560	298	2706	794	3500	140	May 13
Ti-L	86,990	V8/5.6	A7	560	298	2735	765	3500	140	April 13

**PATROL GU**

Patrol GU remains no-nonsense full-size bush touring wagon for a mid-sized price. But keep in mind 118kW/380Nm 3.0-litre is a mid-sized motor, so it's working hard.

	PRICE	ENGINE	TRANS	TORQUE	POWER	WEIGHT	LOAD	TOWING	FUEL	LAST TESTED
DX	53,890	L4TD/3.0	M5	380	118	2366	694	3200	125	
DX	57,690	L4TD/3.0	A4	354	118	2355	665	2500	125	
ST	57,390	L4TD/3.0	M5	380	118	2455	605	3200	125	May 05
ST	60,090	L4TD/3.0	A4	354	118	2420	600	2500	125	Aug 02

**PATROL CAB CHASSIS**

Nissan offers a choice of leaf or coil-spring rear suspension. The only driveline choice is Nissan's 3.0-litre turbo-diesel and manual 'box, but big tank provides great range.

	PRICE	ENGINE	TRANS	TORQUE	POWER	WEIGHT	LOAD	TOWING	FUEL	LAST TESTED
DX (leaf)	52,290	L4TD/3.0	M5	380	118	2120	1160	3200	175	Oct 07
DX (wide wheels)	53,290	L4TD/3.0	M5	380	118	2120	1300	3200	175	
ST (coil)	55,090	L4TD/3.0	M5	380	118	2120	1120	3200	175	

**NAVARA D23**

The D23 – or NP300 Navara as it is being called – replaces both the D22 and D40 models.

	PRICE	ENGINE	TRANS	TORQUE	POWER	WEIGHT	LOAD	TOWING	FUEL	LAST TESTED
Single DX c/c	31,990	L4TD/2.3	M6	403	120	1614	1296	3500	80	
Single RX c/c	32,990	L4TD/2.3	M6	403	120	1626	1284	3500	80	
Single RX c/c	35,490	L4TD/2.3	A7	403	120	1632	1278	3500	80	
King RX c/c	35,490	L4TD/2.3	M6	403	120	1727	1183	3500	80	
King RX p/u	36,990	L4TD/2.3	M6	403	120	1863	1047	3500	80	
King ST p/u	42,990	L4TD/2.3	M6	450	140	1908	1002	3500	80	
King ST p/u	45,490	L4TD/2.3	A7	450	140	1911	999	3500	80	
King ST-X p/u	48,990	L4TD/2.3	M6	450	140	1941	969	3500	80	
King ST-X p/u	51,490	L4TD/2.3	A7	450	140	1944	966	3500	80	
Dual RX c/c	38,490	L4TD/2.3	M6	403	120	1759	1151	3500	80	
Dual RX p/u	39,990	L4TD/2.3	M6	403	120	1816	1094	3500	80	
Dual RX p/u	42,490	L4TD/2.3	A7	403	120	1823	1087	3500	80	
Dual ST p/u	45,990	L4TD/2.3	M6	450	140	1862	1048	3500	80	
Dual ST p/u	48,490	L4TD/2.3	A7	450	140	1865	1045	3500	80	
Dual ST-X p/u	51,990	L4TD/2.3	M6	450	140	1917	993	3500	80	Aug 15
Dual ST-X p/u	54,490	L4TD/2.3	A7	450	140	1921	989	3500	80	

**SSANGYONG**3-year/100,000km [www.ssangyong.com.au](http://www.ssangyong.com.au)**ACTYON SPORTS**

The ute version of Actyon, this is one of a few 4x4 utes with coil rear suspension. Load capacity doesn't match the competition, but on-road handling is good.

	PRICE	ENGINE	TRANS	TORQUE	POWER	WEIGHT	LOAD	TOWING	FUEL	LAST TESTED
Tradie	29,490	L4TD/2.0	M5	310	104	2022	828	2300	75	
Tradie	31,214	L4TD/2.0	A6	310	104	2044	806	2300	75	
SX	30,990	L4TD/2.0	M5	310	104	2022	828	2300	75	Aug 07
SX	32,714	L4TD/2.0	A6	310	104	2044	806	2300	75	Aug 07

**SUZUKI**3-year/100,000km [www.suzuki.com.au](http://www.suzuki.com.au)**JIMNY SIERRA**

The latest version of the smallest off-roader on the market has revived the once-popular Sierra nameplate. Pocket-money pricing for a pocket-sized performer.

	PRICE	ENGINE	TRANS	TORQUE	POWER	WEIGHT	LOAD	TOWING	FUEL	LAST TESTED
Sierra	20,990	L4/1.3	M5	110	63	1060	360	350/1300	40	Oct 10
Sierra	20,990	L4/1.3	A4	110	63	1075	345	350/1300	40	

**GRAND VITARA**

The Grand Vitara has two powerful petrol donks to complement its off-road capability. The big bopper, though, is the terrific one-model turbo-diesel that is an ideal compact tourer option.

	PRICE	ENGINE	TRANS	TORQUE	POWER	WEIGHT	LOAD	TOWING*	FUEL	LAST TESTED
3-door Navigator	25,990	L4/2.4	M5	225	122	1489	426	550/1600	55	Nov 08
3-door Navigator	27,990	L4/2.4	A4	225	122	1504	537	550/1600	55	Nov 08
5-door Sport	30,990	L4/2.4	M5	225	122	1605	465	750/1850	66	
5-door TD	34,990	L4TD/1.9	M5	300	95	1630	425	750/2000	66	Feb 09

\*Unbraked/braked towing weights.

**TATA**3-year/100,000km [www.tatamotors.com.au](http://www.tatamotors.com.au)**XENON**

The Xenon is Tata's replacement for the Telcoline and is a tough, budget-buy Indian-made alternative to the Chinese utes: Foton, Great Wall and now JMC.

	PRICE	ENGINE	TRANS	TORQUE	POWER	WEIGHT	LOAD	TOWING	FUEL	LAST TESTED
Single c/c tray	24,990	L4TD/2.2	M5	320	110	1960	990	2500	70	
Single p/u	24,990	L4TD/2.2	M5	320	110	1960	990	2500	70	
Dual p/u	28,990	L4TD/2.2	M5	320	110	2070	880	2500	70	

**TOYOTA**3-year/100,000km [www.toyota.com.au](http://www.toyota.com.au)**PRADO**

The 150 Prado has grown slightly and copped new styling and (in Kakadu) off-road tech, however purchasers now need to specify hardware for an off-road option pack in Kakadu models.

	PRICE	ENGINE	TRANS	TORQUE	POWER	WEIGHT	LOAD	TOWING	FUEL	LAST TESTED
GX	51,990	L4TD/3.0	M6	410	127	2205	785	2500	150	
GX	56,190	L4TD/3.0	A5	410	127	2205	785	2500	150	Dec 10

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GXL	59,990	V6/4.0	A5	381	202	2240	660	2500	150	
GXL	58,490	L4TD/3.0	M6	410	127	2205	785	2500	150	Feb 10
GXL	60,990	L4TD/3.0	A5	410	127	2205	785	2500	150	
VX	72,600	V6/4.0	A5	381	202	2355	545	2500	150	
VX	73,600	L4TD/3.0	A5	410	127	2435	555	2500	150	
Kakadu	83,100	V6/4.0	A5	381	202	2355	545	2500	150	
Kakadu	84,100	L4TD/3.0	A5	410	127	2435	555	2500	150	Feb 10

FORTUNER										
Toyota's Hilux-based seven-seat wagon arrives to take on Everest, Pajero Sport, MU-X and Colorado 7.										
	PRICE	ENGINE	TRANS	TORQUE	POWER	WEIGHT	LOAD	TOWING	FUEL	LAST TESTED
GX	47,990	L4TD/2.8	M6	450	130	2110	640	3000	80	
GX	49,990	L4TD/2.8	A6	450	130	2110	640	2800	80	
GXL	52,990	L4TD/2.8	M6	450	130	2110	640	3000	80	
GXL	54,990	L4TD/2.8	A6	450	130	2110	640	2800	80	
Crusade	59,990	L4TD/2.8	M6	450	130	2110	640	3000	80	
Crusade	61,990	L4TD/2.8	A6	450	130	2110	640	2800	80	

LAND CRUISER 200 SERIES										
With two beaut V8s – petrol and twin-turbo diesel – the 200 Series Land Cruiser offers loads of performance. Big fuel capacity, big space and big ability make one of the best tourers ever.										
	PRICE	ENGINE	TRANS	TORQUE	POWER	WEIGHT	LOAD	TOWING	FUEL	LAST TESTED
GX TDV8	73,600	V8TD/4.5	A6	650	195	2640	710	3500	138	Jan 12
GXL V8	80,600	V8/4.6	A6	439	228	2555	745	3500	138	April 13
GXL TDV8	83,600	V8TD/4.5	A6	650	195	2630	670	3500	138	July 13
VX V8	90,600	V8/4.6	A6	439	228	2610	690	3500	138	
VX TDV8	93,600	V8TD/4.5	A6	650	195	2675	625	3500	138	
Sahara V8	110,600	V8/4.6	A6	439	228	2665	635	3500	138	Sept 14
Sahara TDV8	113,600	V8TD/4.5	A6	650	195	2720	580	3500	138	

LAND CRUISER 70										
The 70 Series 'Cruiser's torquey TDV8 makes it a load-hauler extraordinaire. Available as long-wheel-base Troopie or five-door mid-wheelbase wagon.										
	PRICE	ENGINE	TRANS	TORQUE	POWER	WEIGHT	LOAD	TOWING	FUEL	LAST TESTED
TroopCarrier WM	62,990	V8TD/4.5	M5	430	151	2320	980	3500	180	
TroopCarrier GXL	64,990	V8TD/4.5	M5	430	151	2335	965	3500	180	Feb 08
Wagon WM	57,990	V8TD/4.5	M5	430	151	2220	780	3500	90	
Wagon GXL	61,990	V8TD/4.5	M5	430	151	2190	810	3500	90	Feb 08

LAND CRUISER 70 CAB CHASSIS										
With its TDV8 powerplant, the Land Cruiser ute is better than ever. Optional Toyota diff locks make it super-capable off the road.										
	PRICE	ENGINE	TRANS	TORQUE	POWER	WEIGHT	LOAD	TOWING	FUEL	LAST TESTED
Workmate c/c	56,990	V8TD/4.5	M5	430	151	2045	1003	3500	180	
GX c/c	58,990	V8TD/4.5	M5	430	151	2010	1013	3500	180	
GXL c/c	60,990	V8TD/4.5	M5	430	151	2020	1023	3500	180	Dec 07

LAND CRUISER 79 DOUBLE CAB										
Tough-as-nails and with room for five, the LC79 dual-cab has the same V8 manual torque and diff-lock option as other 70s to make for an almost unstoppable off-road workhorse.										
	PRICE	ENGINE	TRANS	TORQUE	POWER	WEIGHT	LOAD	TOWING	FUEL	LAST TESTED
Workmate c/c	61,990	V8TD/4.5	M5	430	151	2205	900	3500	130	
GXL c/c	65,990	V8TD/4.5	M5	430	151	2215	900	3500	130	Jan 13

HILUX										
Hilux is now an older design and suffers an equipment and ability disparity compared to fresher models such as Ranger. But with formidable in-service reliability and support it remains a sensible choice.										
	PRICE	ENGINE	TRANS	TORQUE	POWER	WEIGHT	LOAD	TOWING	FUEL	LAST TESTED
Single SR c/c	35,490	L4TD/3.0	M5	360	126	1595	1240	2500	76	
Single SR c/c	38,240	L4TD/3.0	A5	360	126	1620	1215	2500	76	
Extra SR c/c	39,490	L4TD/3.0	M5	360	126	1795	915	2500	76	
Extra SR p/u	40,990	L4TD/3.0	M5	360	126	1770	940	2500	76	
Extra SR5 p/u	47,990	L4TD/3.0	M5	360	126	1830	880	2500	76	
Dual SR c/c	40,990	L4TD/3.0	M5	360	126	1825	955	2500	76	
Dual SR5 p/u	54,490	V6/4.0	A5	360	175	1770	1040	2500	76	
Dual SR p/u	42,490	L4TD/3.0	M5	360	126	1810	970	2500	76	
Dual SR p/u	44,490	L4TD/3.0	A5	360	126	1805	975	2500	76	
Dual SR5 p/u	51,740	L4TD/3.0	M5	360	126	1815	965	2500	76	Jan 12
Dual SR5 p/u	53,990	L4TD/3.0	A5	360	126	1835	945	2500	76	Aug 14

FJ CRUISER										
The FJ Cruiser doesn't suffer under its retro styling – with Prado platform it's capable anywhere. Petrol/auto only but grunt, price, fuel capacity, diff lock and Crawl Control make it an off-road bargain.										
	PRICE	ENGINE	TRANS	TORQUE	POWER	WEIGHT	LOAD	TOWING	FUEL	LAST TESTED
V6	46,990	V6/4.0	A5	380	200	2000	510	2250	150	Feb 12

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## 5 STARS FOR SPORT

MITSUBISHI'S new Pajero Sport has been slammed in to a barrier by ANCAP to come away with a five-star safety rating. That's better than the Challenger model it replaces, so it will be an important factor for potential buyers.

"The Pajero Sport is a significant safety improvement over the model it replaces and provides consumers in the large 4WD segment with another five-star choice," ANCAP Chief Executive Officer James Goodwin said.

The five-star ANCAP rating applies to all three variants of the Pajero Sport now on sale in Australia.

"The Pajero Sport introduces a host of new active safety features on the Exceed model, including Blind Spot Warning, Ultrasonic Misacceleration Mitigation System and a Multi-around Monitor, which will feature on a Mitsubishi model for the first time," MMA CEO Mutsuhiro Oshikiri said.

"We're pleased to confirm that all models in the all-new Pajero Sport range have been recognised with a maximum five-star ANCAP safety rating for their arrival in showrooms."

VOLKSWAGEN 3 year/unlimited km <a href="http://www.volkswagen.com.au">www.volkswagen.com.au</a>										
AMAROK										
Amarok is an impressive all-rounder with two Ute Of The Year wins. Bi-turbo engine punches above its weight and is very economical. MY15 entry-level model now called Core Edition.										
	PRICE	ENGINE	TRANS	TORQUE	POWER	WEIGHT	LOAD	TOWING	FUEL	LAST TESTED
Core Ed 400 sc/c	\$35,490	L4TD/2.0	M6	400	132	1865	1175	2800	80	
Core Ed 420 sc/c	\$38,490	L4TD/2.0	M6	420	132	1873	1175	3000	80	
Core Ed 400 s/c	\$36,990	L4TD/2.0	A8	400	132	1865	1175	2800	80	
Core Ed 420 s/c	\$39,990	L4TD/2.0	A8	420	132	1873	1175	3000	80	
Core Ed 400 dc/c	\$41,490	L4TD/2.0	M6	400	132	1978	1062	2800	80	
Core Ed 400 d/c	\$42,990	L4TD/2.0	A8	400	132	1978	1062	2800	80	
Core Ed 420 dc/c	\$44,490	L4TD/2.0	A8	420	132	1985	1055	3000	80	
Core Ed 420 d/c	\$45,990	L4TD/2.0	A8	420	132	1985	1055	3000	80	
Trendline400 dc/c	\$45,490	L4TD/2.0	M6	400	132	2018	1022	2800	80	
TrendlineTDI400	\$46,990	L4TD/2.0	M6	400	132	2018	1022	2800	80	
Trendline420 dc/c	\$48,490	L4TD/2.0	A8	420	132	2026	1014	3000	80	
TrendlineTDI420	\$49,990	L4TD/2.0	A8	420	132	2026	1014	3000	80	Jan 13
HighlineTDI400	\$52,490	L4TD/2.0	M6	400	132	2073	967	2800	80	
HighlineTDI420	\$55,490	L4TD/2.0	A8	420	132	2080	960	3000	80	
UltimateTDI400	\$62,290	L4TD/2.0	M6	400	132	2087	953	2000	80	
UltimateTDI420	\$65,290	L4TD/2.0	A8	420	132	2094	946	3000	80	Sept 12

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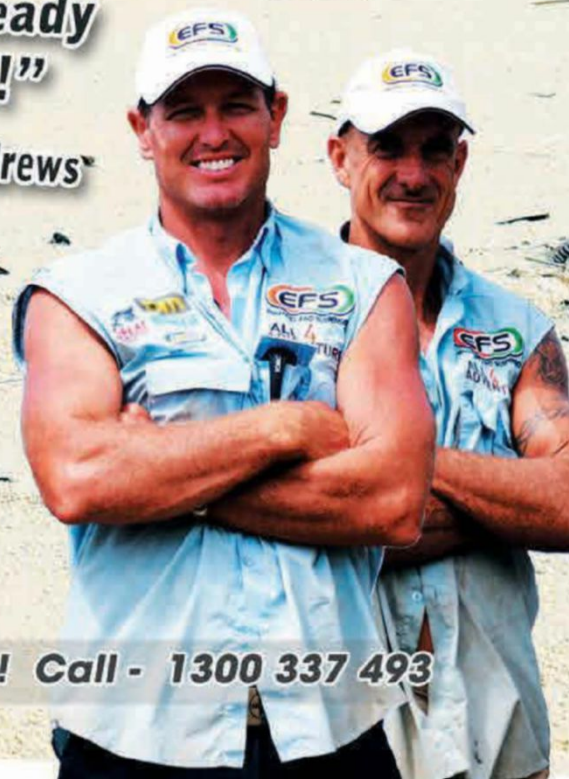
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